

# YEARS · OF · PLENTY

BY · IVOR · BROWN



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# **YEARS OF PLENTY**

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*"The wealth of youth, we spent it well  
And decently, as very few can.  
And is it lost? I cannot tell:  
And what is more I doubt if you can."*

HILAIRE BELLOC.

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# YEARS OF PLENTY

BY IVOR BROWN

LONDON  
MARTIN SECKER  
NUMBER FIVE JOHN STREET  
ADELPHI

*First Published 1915*

## CONTENTS

BOOK ONE: SCHOOL	PAGE 7
BOOK TWO: UNIVERSITY	187



**BOOK ONE**  
**SCHOOL**





## I

LIFE seemed to Martin Leigh, as he gazed at the wooden walls of his cubicle, very overwhelming: there were so many things to remember. He had lived through his first day as a boarder at a public school and at length he had the great joy of knowing that for nine hours there would be nothing to find out. He seemed to have been finding things out ever since seven o'clock that morning: finding out his form and his form master, his desk at school and his desk in the house, his place in chapel and his place at meals, his hours of work and his field for play. He had moved in a world of mystery, a world of doors which had to be opened and of locks which had to be picked. It had been terrifying work, this probing of places.

All day Martin had been shown things by formidable people in a hustling, inadequate way: he had been far too awed by the majesty of his conductors to ask any questions and he realised now that he had forgotten nearly all that he had been told. He knew that he was in the Lower Fifth, Classical, and that his form master was a renowned terror: he knew also that he was supposed to play football with the other small boys of his house in a muddy-looking field some distance away.

But his place in chapel . . . that had vanished entirely from his mind. And to-morrow morning he would either have to pluck up his scanty courage and make a fool of himself by asking one of the formidable people, or else trust to luck and probably make an even greater fool of himself by wandering disconsolate in the aisle. He was vague also as to the locality of the Lower Fifth classroom : there was, indeed, one other member of that form in the house, but he was a gigantic, moustachioed person, a man of weight in the football world : to approach him would be impossible. Martin came to the conclusion that not only would chapel make him notorious for life, but that he would also get lost in school and reach his classroom late : then he would come in blushing, amidst the smiles of the superior. And the Terror would not rage and swear like a gentleman : he would smile, as he had smiled that morning, and make a little joke.

Life was undoubtedly overwhelming. And there were other no less cruel facts to face. His collars were all wrong. All the other new boys, he had noticed, wore Eton collars : these, apparently, should be retained for a few terms, until the owner considered himself sufficiently dignified for 'stick-ups.' Martin, who was fourteen and tall for his age, had been sent to school with 'stick-ups' and no Eton collars. He saw at once the horrid nature of his offence : it was side of the first degree, involuntary side, but who

would know that, much less conjecture it? The new boys, as timid as himself, had of course said nothing, but he had observed the smiles and queer looks of the people about a year older, who had themselves only just assumed the emblem of position. It was a very awkward and bothering occurrence, and he had already written home for others to be sent as soon as possible. In reality Martin was more worried about this than about all the information he had forgotten. What made him dread the morrow with a fear he had never known before was not so much the possibility of his wandering about school and chapel like a lost sheep, but the certainty that he would be dressed in open defiance of all the sartorial traditions of Elfrey School.

Martin tried to console himself with the reflection that nothing could now deprive him of nine hours' peace. He was glad that he was allowed a cubicle and could enjoy a certain amount of privacy: he had anticipated a large, bare room with rows of beds and the continual shower, so dear to the books of his youth, of hurtling slippers and sponges. Instead he had found a comfortable dormitory with a broad passage separating two rows of nine wooden-sided cubicles. As far as he could gather most of the boys adorned their cubicles with family photographs, presumably because they were content with a hasty glance at their parents and sisters during the shamefully few seconds in which the acts of washing and dressing were

completed: their actresses they pinned inside their workroom desks, or, if they were study owners, hung on their walls so that the long watches of the day were not uncomforted. It struck Martin that here was another gap: he had not brought with him any family photographs, and he expected that to seem unfilial would be very bad form: nor had he a favourite actress. He would have, he saw, to ask for his family photographs to be sent with the Eton collars and the sardines, which he had discovered at tea to be essential to the good life. The actress problem could be dealt with later.

The rules of the dormitory were strict. Lights were turned out at ten and no one could leave his cubicle without permission. No talking was allowed after 'Lights out.' But to-night things were disorganised. In the first place, Moore was the prefect on duty, an occurrence which usually meant that no one was on duty, for it was Moore's habit to go back to his study to find a book and then to forget about returning. And besides it was only natural that at the beginning of term discipline should not be established in all its accustomed rigour. Everyone, except the six new boys, had plenty to say, and in the prolonged absence of Moore they passed freely about from cubicle to cubicle. It was already a quarter past ten.

Martin, of course, lay quietly in bed gazing at the cracks in the plaster above him and wondering how

long it would be before the lights went out and sleep became possible. His thoughts shifted painfully from chapel to collars, from collars to the Lower Fifth. This invasion of a new world which had seemed only a week ago to be so supreme an adventure was nothing but a nuisance and an agony. His sole comfort lay in the reflection that bed, even a hard, knobbly, school bed is an excellent place: here at least there was nothing to find out.

Suddenly he realised that a conversation was in progress close to the curtain of his cubicle. Cullen, his neighbour in the dormitory, was talking to a friend called Neave: already he had marked them both as giants of a year's standing, youthful bloods of surpassing glory.

"I've got a ripping photo of Sally Savoy," said Cullen.

"She's a bit of fluff for you," answered Neave.

"Yes, by gum. My brother at Sandhurst told me a grand story about her."

"What was it?"

"It's jolly hot stuff."

"All the better. Let's have it."

Then Cullen launched out. Martin, who could not help overhearing every word, understood the beginning of the tale, but just when Neave's exclamation betrayed the listener's thrill, he found it unintelligible. And later on there was the recitation of a Limerick

which he could not at all understand. It was not that anything deeply wicked was related, but Martin had been a day boy at his private school and had only received a vague impression of the ways of nature and of man. Never before had it struck him how confused and ignorant he was.

Then a mighty voice roared : " What the deuce are you all playing at ? " Numerous forms in more or less advanced stages of nudity started like rabbits to their proper cubicles, while Moore bellowed in the doorway. If it had been anyone but Moore there would have been a row : but Moore was an angel and never did anything but shout. The lights were turned down and the voices died away.

Cullen took one lingering glance at Sally before he put her away and said his prayers : Neave, having ended his supplications, lay chuckling quietly in bed. Martin began to feel acutely miserable. In spite of all his hopes that the dormitory would bring him peace, he had only come across another door which had to be opened. There was no escape : he would have to find out, for he might be expected to join in one of these conversations and then he would be shown up. He would have to discover some decent new boy and question him tactfully. It would be embarrassing : it would be perfect hell : but it would be inevitable. He began to wish he was back in Devonshire, at home. God, how he loathed Life and Elfrey and

Sally Savoy : he wanted . . . but just when, in spite of the promptings of conscience, he was yielding to the soft embrace of sentiment and memory, sleep saved the situation.

## II

It is one of the world's happiest phenomena that pessimism, by creating expectations gloomier far than any possible event, destroys by that very process its *raison d'être*. For Martin the future had, almost of necessity, to be brighter than its promise. He was pushed into his right place in chapel and found his way, without undue meandering, to the Lower Fifth classroom: he even appeased the Terror by his ability to explain the history of the genitive case in Greek. A schoolmaster's lot is hard enough without his making it worse, and the Terror sensibly seized any opportunity of investing his work with an element of real interest. With the bloods who found higher progress impossible and remained to clog the Lower Fifth, it was always routine: but Martin had come with a scholarship and was capable of an ingenious and tasteful turn in translation. He was obviously a boy in whom an interest could be taken, and the Terror warmed to him even to the extent of abandoning the sardonic humour on which he so prided himself. According to all the best traditions of scholastic fiction, Martin should have been unpopular for this reason, but as a matter of fact the bloods were far too bored with the



Terror and all his works, and far too contemptuous of all clever kids and 'sweat-guts,' to take the least notice of what happened : or, if they did take notice, they were not going to give themselves away by showing it.

The collar problem had been the hardest to face, and Martin still longed eagerly for the Etons to arrive. As for the question of Neave, Cullen, and Sally Savoy, he found that here too his fears had been exaggerated. Most of the smaller boys did not talk on this subject : Neave and Cullen turned out to be remote and superior creatures : by their well-oiled hair and exquisite variety of ties and socks and handkerchiefs they revealed the majesty of their doggishness. But Martin was not prepared to run any risks : he became intimate with the most imposing of the new boys, one Caruth, and plied him with questions. He saw plainly that it was an ordeal which had to be gone through if he was ever to attain peace of mind, and consequently he bravely endured Caruth's surprise at the deficiencies in his knowledge. Martin had foolishly begun by hinting that he really knew a good deal and only wanted a few supplementary details, but he soon discovered that he was giving himself most terribly away. Then he broke down and confessed his ignorance.

"You are a kid," said Caruth. "You with your stick-ups !"

"Well, it's not my fault," protested Martin.

Thereupon Caruth became very patronising and talked to him at length, telling him much that was true and more that was false : he also gave information as to suitable passages in Shakespeare and the Bible for the confirmation of theory. At first Martin was sickened and disgusted by his investigations, but his sense of repulsion was soon outweighed by the consideration that another barrier had been broken down and that now he could join in conversation, if need be, without that gnawing fear of being shown up. Caruth had the decency not to betray Martin's ignorance to the other new boys.

Martin was in Berney's house. Berney's had a reputation for mediocrity—that is to say, it rarely won many challenge cups, and those which it did hold were gained more often by individuals than by teams. Berney's usually had some brilliant athletes, but it never succeeded in training good sides. Occasionally at the bidding of a conscientious prefect it made an effort ; but its efforts were nearly always in vain. Berney's had a lofty contempt for pot-hunting, which the other houses of course attributed to jealousy. When Martin came to Berney's the house was in its usual state : two of the prefects, Jamieson and Parker, were very clever men but indifferent athletes : the other two, Moore and Leopard, were brilliant athletes and not at all clever. The house as a whole was listless and apathetic, and there was a healthy spirit of

tolerance resulting in the formation of groups. There was a doggish group, which discussed socks and hair oil and other more exciting things, a young athletic group, a group of 'sweat-guts,' and a group of complete nullities. The new boys remained in a bunch until half-term and then began to drift to their appropriate circles. Martin, reasoning from certain conversations at his private school, had been afraid that the new boys might have a rough time. Nothing of the sort occurred. They were left very much alone and, as long as they put on no side, received quite reasonable treatment. In all his career at Elfrey Martin never saw a fight or a case of bullying: at times there would be a little playful ragging, and insolence usually met with its reward, but there was no systematic oppression. Above all, the 'sweat-guts,' though they might be laughed at now and then, were never persecuted.

At the end of this second week Martin received two invitations to supper. One was from Mrs Berney, the other from Mrs Foskett, the headmaster's wife. Mrs Berney's hospitality came first. Instead of going in to house tea and eating bread and butter and whatever else he chose to provide for himself, he went to the front part of the house with a clean collar (Eton by now) and hair 'sloshed' down with copious water. There he met Caruth and two others, all equally wet about the hair. They were fed with fried soles, cold

tongue, meringues, tea, toast, and marmalade—not at all a bad business, thought Martin, and well worth the previous exertions of the toilet.

Mr Berney sat at the head of the table. He was a little, freckled man with a fair moustache: he had become a schoolmaster through despair and a housemaster through patience. His chief interest lay in natural history and botany, and he was never so happy as when he forgot all about the school and his house and tramped the surrounding country. He managed his house with a bare minimum of efficiency and was never loved and never hated. In the routine of teaching at school and administration at home he worked steadily, without mistakes and without enthusiasm. He said all that a housemaster ought to say about games and work and religion and moral tone without stopping to think whether it was desirable or even consistent, for he had long ago discovered that to start thinking would be to court anxiety, if not disaster. He lived, on the whole, for his holidays.

At the other end of the table was his wife, small and dark and interesting. She it was who ran the house, not because she liked it, but because she worshipped her husband and knew that he loathed responsibility. She was popular with the boys, who could pardon her complete inability to understand games (a heinous sin in a housemaster's wife) because of her unfailing kindness and sympathy. She fed them well, as

schools go, believed in culture, and used to gather select spirits to read poetry in her drawing-room.

Martin sat next to her and found her easy to talk to. She too was relieved, because she usually had to struggle with an athletic conversation, a prolonged torture in which she would cause horror and dismay by confusing half-backs and cover-points. But Martin could talk about books and even pictures : she became interested and forgot to dole out meringues, until, reminded by her husband, she looked up and saw with shame the expectant faces of her guests. Afterwards she took them to her comfortable drawing-room and talked on general school subjects : she kept them until she was certain that of this batch Martin alone had possibilities. Then she drove them to prep.

The Fosketts, as befitted a headmaster and his wife, were more formidable. To begin with, their hospitality involved, in addition to the clean collar and sloshed hair, the wearing of Sunday clothes and the completion of prep in odd moments. The six new boys at Berney's all went together, very timid and overwhelmed at the thought of being entertained by one so remote and so tremendous as the Head. He was not in their eyes so infinitely great as Llewelyn, the Captain of Football : but, distinctly, he counted.

Foskett was one of the new headmasters. He was young (Elfrey figured early in the *cursus honorum* of one who aspired to the greatest thrones), and he had

declined to take holy orders. But, though fashionably sceptical about the hardest dogmas, he believed intensely in all the right things, in the Classics and the Empire and Moral Tone and the Educational Value of Athletics and Our Duty to the Poor and the Need for Personal Service. Consequently his name was already a byword with all the conscientious young men in London and at the universities who form quasi-religious clubs and believe that the world can be reformed by heartiness and committee meetings. Foskett was a very able man, who knew quite well what he wanted and was determined to get it : being an Englishman to the backbone, he combined an affection for the word Duty with an invincible belief that Duty, for him, always corresponded with his own particular ambitions. He was by no means a hypocrite : it simply never occurred to him that his policy of 'getting on' might be inconsistent with some of his moral ideals. While he had chosen to disguise the more unpalatable articles of faith with a sugary paste of scientific catch-words, he never questioned the absolute value of Christian Morality.

He had married, characteristically, the daughter of a colonial bishop, a tall, gaunt woman with sparkling eyes and an immense capacity for enthusiasm. Not only was she prepared to take up all her husband's causes, but she also took up him and worshipped at his shrine with a persistent and unflinching devotion. He

represented for her all that was estimable: he was strong and wise and pure: he was just the man to mould the lives and ideals of the new generation, to make the finest religion and the finest patriotism vital forces in the school, and to pass through the richest headmasterships in England to a dignified old age as head of an Oxford college. They were both of them supremely methodical, and she bore him a child every three years. Naturally her guests were overwhelmed. While Foskett looked quiet and authoritative and made bad jokes in a quaint, theoretic manner at the head of the table, his wife chattered and gushed and became vastly enthusiastic over house junior football teams and the personnel of next year's cricket eleven. Her grasp of detail and statistics carried dismay even to boys. Martin was glad that he was in the middle of the table and avoided the necessity of making conversation.

"Medio tutissimus ibis," he quoted to himself from that morning's 'trans' as he listened to Caruth, who had used Brilliantine instead of water and was eager to shine socially, answering her questions and assenting to her tremendous declamations.

"Isn't it splendid," said Mrs Foskett, "about the school athletics? When we first came here Elfrey hardly ever won its school matches and now we never get beaten. Fermor's play last summer was marvellous, positively marvellous. D'you know, he actually got

fifty wickets for 9·76 and had a batting average of 37. He's sure to get a blue at Cambridge. The last Elfreyan to get a blue was Staples : he made 74 at Lord's and was run out by an Old Etonian."

"Hard luck," said Caruth. "I do think being run out is rotten."

"Are you a cricketer?" continued Mrs Foskett.

"Well, I was captain of my preparatory school," said Caruth, assuming the humble voice and depreciatory smile that betokened a proper modesty. "But of course that's not much."

"It's the best beginning. You're sure to play for the school before you're done."

"Oh, I don't suppose so," answered Caruth. He felt it to be an inefficient answer and wondered, fingering his tie, what the ideal reply would have been. Would 'Oh, Mrs Foskett!' have been too familiar?

Then it turned out that Caruth had been to Murren for the winter sports. This was one of Mrs Foskett's well-known themes. Her subjects included Greece, Switzerland, Patriotism, Sport, and the Nobility.

"Oh, I think Murren's so lovely," she began. "To be so high up, right above those Wengen people. I love ski-ing. And the sun. And the glorious air. There's nothing like it. And such nice people. Such really charming people. Last winter we met Lord and Lady Dalston. They're so interested in the personal side of



Social Service. Lord Dalston has a club in the Mile End Road, and in the evenings he goes and sings there himself—such a beautiful voice. Of course they don't get many people yet because of——”

“The picture palaces,” suggested Caruth nobly. He thought it about time that he got a word in and was eager to excuse the scandalous absence of appreciation of Lord Dalston's art.

“Yes, those terrible places. And they do have such sensational films in the East End. I'm sure they have a bad influence. What the people really need is a drill hall with exercises and good music. I've been putting the case to Lady Dalston.”

“Rather,” said Caruth, who was himself a staunch patron of the pictorial drama. And then he added: “I think National Service would be a good thing for the poor.”

He had given Mrs Foskett her cue. She broke out into a triumph song in whose turbulent flow the words ‘physique’ and ‘efficiency’ came frequently rolling. She was careful to say that she was not a militantist and hated the thought of war, but she didn't see any harm in teaching people how to shoot one another if need be. “War's so educational,” she ended. “Brings out the strength of the nation.”

And then there floated from the other end of the table the throaty voice of the Head as he told an antique Jowett story, which had been picked up in his under-

graduate days and always did good service when the flame of conversation flickered.

Martin, sitting silently in the middle of the table, concentrated on the supper. It was worth all the attention he gave it. He managed to consume a plate of soup, some fried sole, two sausages and bacon, one helping of trifle and one of fruit salad, and as much dessert and chocolate as came his way. The Fosketts certainly understood the art of feeding.

Afterwards there was a feeble attempt made to play some games, but not even Mrs Foscett could overcome the self-consciousness of her guests. Interest waned and the Head's jokes became worse and worse. They were all relieved when the time came for departure.

As they walked back Caruth, who was secretly pleased with his conversational display, said loftily: "Thank the Lord that's over."

Martin answered: "I should think so. Ghastly show." In reality he was thinking, 'Ripping grub.' He was not a particularly greedy person, but Elfrey air is keen and any growing boy can appreciate a solid meal about half-past six. Martin was quite prepared, for his part, to change his clothes and undergo the ordeal of any company, even Mrs Foscett's, for the sake of a meal which included sausages and trifle.

### III

ELFREY was one of the numerous public schools brought into existence by the sudden growth of the middle class during the nineteenth century. Consequently it had neither money nor traditions. The lack of the former was a severe handicap and could only result in the scandalous underpayment of the masters and the abominable necessity of sending round the hat, which of course returned half empty, whenever the school needed a new building or playing-field. The absence of the latter was more wholesome. Everyone had a hearty contempt for Eton and Harrow and Winchester and considered that the fuss made about them was ridiculous. "We could have damped the lot at cricket last summer" was the general opinion, and it may have been correct, so great had Fermor been. How far this attitude was based on mere jealousy, and how far it represented a sound distrust of top-hats, side, and antiquated customs, it would be difficult to decide. As a result of their abhorrence for tradition, Elfrey had no organised system of fagging, and each house had established its own regime.

At Berney's any prefect or member of the Sixth could, theoretically, command the services of anyone

who had not a study ; but this right was little used, and it was generally felt that too great assumption on the part of a Sixth would lead to unpopularity.

Prefects, however, as opposed to Sixths, were accustomed to take unto themselves a small boy and give him the use of their study on the condition that he dusted it, cleaned their cups and plates, and made himself generally useful. Although this office received the derogatory title of 'being study-slut,' it was, on the whole, rather sought after, as only the more attractive and popular members of the workroom were chosen for the position.

Martin was therefore considerably surprised when one of the prefects, called Leopard, adopted him in the fourth week of term. Leopard was a genuine Olympian. He had played with distinction in the historic Elfreyan eleven of last summer : he was school sports champion : he had played rackets for Elfrey at Queen's Club : and now he was being tried as wing three-quarter in the rugger team. By specialising in science he had scraped into a Sixth, and he was intending to continue his athletic, if not his scientific, career at Cambridge. This ambition, however, necessitated the study of Greek, and the study of Greek necessitated for a scientist laborious days. Leopard had discovered that Martin was in the Lower Fifth and could write Greek prose without howlers. He seemed also to be quite an attractive individual, and neither law nor custom forbade

the acquisition of a second menial. So Martin became, to his own great satisfaction, the junior study-slut of Leopard.

Pearson, his senior in that office, naturally attempted to make him do all the work of tidying, but Leopard put an end to that, and it was soon understood that Martin's function was the composition of correct Greek prose. This he fulfilled efficiently and Leopard, who had recently been harried by his instructor in Greek in a way quite revolting to his dignity and self-respect, found life at once more easy and more honourable. He became very intimate with Martin and would talk to him at great length in a patronising but amusing way : he would even allow Martin to rag him and call him by his nickname, Spots.

Inevitably Martin worshipped Spots. The study became to him a temple, a very awful and a sacred place. On its walls were scores of photographs, signed pictures of school bloods past and present, photographs of elevens, photographs of fifteens, photographs of the Racket Pair, and photographs of a girl, who was usually on horseback. These last were carefully framed and signed in round, sprawling letters, 'Kiddie.' Martin, as he gazed upon them, began to form conceptions of the perfect life. There was a bookcase, too, with a fine collection of shilling novels whose paper covers bore lurid pictures of Life and Love. In spite of a certain monotony of theme and a devastat-

ing dullness in its elaboration, Spots seemed to derive considerable pleasure from those works, which he always read while Martin was doing his Greek prose. Martin was kept too busy to do much reading, but he appreciated the pictures on the covers and was impressed by the dark-eyed women in red who accepted on divans the passionate kisses of blond young men in faultless evening dress. The room also contained some old swords (bought from a predecessor), a number of rackets, a bag of golf-clubs, and a fine array of cushions with humorous designs. The culinary outfit and china were complete to the verge of opulence. The Leopard's Den, as the study was commonly called, had achieved a certain reputation for magnificence, a reputation in which Martin gloried. He even enjoyed the dusting and cleaning and despised Pearson for his laziness and lack of proper pride. But it was not mere priggishness that animated him.

Meanwhile Mrs Berney had not forgotten his possibilities, and it was arranged that he should attend her poetry circle which met after prayers on Saturday evenings. It was composed mainly of older boys, and two of them were vast intellectuals in the Upper Sixth, so that Martin felt very awed at the prospect of reading Keats amid such company. One of them was actually the school poet and had lately worked off in *The Elfreyan* the emotions evoked by a summer holiday in the Lakes :

“The flaming bracken fires the breast  
Of bosky Borrowdale,  
Down swoops the sun in a riot of red  
Behind Scawfell to a watery bed,  
And the moon hath clomb o’er Skiddaw’s head,  
So perfect and so pale.”

Martin, who had also been in the Lakes, thought this rather good and much better than Wordsworth. He was still a Tennysonian and connected poetry with the lavish use of alliteration and words like ‘clomb’ and ‘bosky.’ The thought that on the next Saturday evening he was to read in the company of such an one was as terrifying as it was inspiring. But it was not yet to be.

Leopard’s one fault was, in Martin’s opinion, his tendency to sulk : his career had been so uniformly successful that he was easily piqued by a reverse. Once or twice before Martin had thought it expedient to slip away quietly when he saw Spots looking black, but on this particular Saturday Fate fought against him. Leopard was dropped from the school fifteen for the match against Oxford A. It was admitted that once Leopard had the ball in his hands no one on earth could catch him, but it was rumoured that his defence was weak : it was always the way with these running-track sprinters ; they couldn’t tackle. So the captain had taken notice of a mere child of sixteen, called Raikes, who played “back” for his house and could tumble anybody over.

Oxford brought down a strong team, but they only won by sixteen points to eleven : and Raikes not only scored two excellent tries, but marked with unerring certainty the notable Rhodes scholar who had made history in South African Rugby. It was on the lips of all that Spots was in the soup or the apple-cart (the popularity of the rival metaphors was evenly balanced), and sporting members of Raikes' house were laying ten to one that their hero would be 'capped' within a month. Spots had watched the match dismally from the touch-line and he did not take it at all well. When he came back to Berney's his angry soul cried out for tea : and he found that all his cups were dirty. It was Pearson's duty to clean the cups, and Pearson was in 'sicker' with influenza. Martin had been told to do Pearson's work for the next few days, but he had not realised what Pearson really did and he had forgotten about the cups. Moreover, after watching the match, he had gone off to the tuck-shop to eat ham and chocolate : so Leopard shouted for him in vain, and then, spurning the proffered aid of sycophantic aliens, he furiously washed his own cups and made his own tea. An angry man does not lightly reject an excuse for wrath, and Spots thoroughly enjoyed the nursing of his grievance.

On his way back from the tuck-shop Martin borrowed a copy of Keats from the school library : then he settled down at his desk in the workroom and began to look through the Odes to see if there were any words



that he could not pronounce. The meeting of the poetry circle was formidably near and the old fear of being shown up was vigorously attacking him.

Suddenly Caruth came up and said: "Spots wants you."

So he put away the book and went up to the study. He saw at once that Spots was in the blackest of moods.

"Why the blazes didn't you wash the cups?" he said. "I told you to do Pearson's work."

Martin trembled. "I forgot," he said. "I couldn't think of all the things Pearson did."

"I should have thought that the washing of cups might have struck you as a fairly obvious thing to do."

"Yes; I'm sorry."

"The fact of the matter is, you're getting a bit above yourself. Just because you're clever you think you're everyone. Now you're too good to wash cups."

"It wasn't that really, Leopard. I forgot."

"Well you damned well mustn't forget. You're too good to keep awake. That's just as bad. Now get out, you little beast, and come to me after prayers."

Martin went back to his Keats in misery. He could guess what was in store for him, but he could not be certain, because Spots might have recovered from his wrath by the appointed time and then he might treat the matter as a joke. But if Spots didn't recover . . . well, then he would be swiped. Martin had never been

caned at his private school and this would be his first experience; he wondered how much it would hurt. Then fear came surging over him, not the dread of anything definite, but the hideous fear of the unknown. He was not so much afraid that he would be hurt as that he would show that he had been hurt: that was the deadly, the unpardonable, sin. He wished to heaven he had been swiped before so that he might know his own capacity for endurance. Keats became intolerable. House tea was a long-drawn agony. Discussion centred on the match and the brilliant play of Raikes.

"What did old Spots want?" asked Caruth.

"He seemed to be in the deuce of a hair."

"Only about cleaning cups," said Martin gloomily.

"Thank the Lord I'm not a study-slut. Was he very ratty?"

"Oh, not very. Flannery, you hog, pass the bread."

The conversation had at any cost to be changed, and Martin was pleased when the general attention was directed to the colossal hoggishness of Flannery, who was mixing jam, sardines, and potted meat.

As time went on the agony of suspense grew like an avalanche, carrying all before it. Martin did practically no work during prep. Impossible to linger over algebra or the Bacchæ when Spots and his cups obsessed the mind. It was not the injustice of being victimised for a slip of the memory when Pearson was

in sicker, but the possibility of being shown up as a coward that tortured him most. He knew that other boys were swiped with some frequency and managed to pretend that they did not mind. But it might turn out that he was not so tough as other boys. Besides Spots had the wrist of a racket-player and was renowned for his powers of castigation. And then there was the poetry circle. If the worst happened, he would have to cut that and explain afterwards. What on earth could he say? The thought was too horrid for consideration.

After prep and supper Mr Berney used to read prayers, while the boys knelt down and thought about any odd subject that came to mind. They were not, as a house, particularly irreligious, but it is astonishingly easy to acquire the habit of saying 'Amen' at the right place and repeating the Lord's Prayer without being aware of your actions. But to-night Martin was conscious of all that was said and did not open his lips. As he gazed in silence at the backs of the wooden benches he began to feel physically sick.

After prayers the house dispersed to talk, or finish work, or go to bed. Martin hurried to Leopard's study. There he waited for five age-long minutes: he felt that a hundred swipings would be better than this delay. The study seemed a vast blur of photographs, all dim and misty except one: that was a large picture of Kiddie, the equestrienne, who beamed on him from

close at hand, gripping her riding-switch. Kiddie became the only object in the room. The smile and the switch fascinated him. They were symbolic, they were abominable. At this same Kiddie he had often gazed in rapturous worship, wondering whether Leopard was the more blessed for knowing her or she for knowing him. God, how he loathed her now.

At last Leopard arrived. The clouds had not lifted. He had just overheard Moore remarking to a friend that, as a three-quarter, Raikes was worth a dozen of Spots.

"Oh, you," he said quietly. "Just go to the prefects' common-room."

Martin turned and went out. His fate was settled. He felt, as he walked down the long passage listening to the tread of Leopard behind him, as though all his internal organs were falling into his feet.

When they reached the common-room Leopard turned up the light and locked the door. Then he took a cane from a cupboard in the corner and made Martin bend over with his head under the table. Leopard had suffered during the evening, for the almost certain loss of a rugger cap on which he had counted was a terrible blow to his pride and his ambitions. He was angry, desperately angry, and his only desire was to express his anger in action. The fact that he was fond of Martin only added piquancy to the situation. The maximum punishment that a house prefect

could inflict was eight strokes. He did not stop short of his maximum.

After the first three strokes Martin felt as though nothing could prevent him crying out : then a blessed numbness seemed to come over him and he remained silent and motionless. Afterwards he had to climb on to the table and put out the light. Then he went upstairs to his cubicle : he was not in the mood for poetry. On such occasions rumour has swift wings, and when he reached the dormitory the news had magically been spread abroad.

Voices cried : "How many ?"

"Eight."

"Did it hurt ?"

"No, not much." He lied, for he had learned the tradition.

There were murmurs of : "Bad luck," "Old Spots is the limit," "Just because he got the chuck for not tackling."

And then Neave remarked in the midst of a silence : "If we get nailed funkng a collar we get swiped. But if Spots gets nailed, then he swipes someone else. That's justice."

The expressions of genuine sympathy were very comforting to Martin. Though now the numbness was wearing off and the reality of his pain came home to him, he was happier than he had been for days. He had opened another door : he was getting on with

his task of finding things out. Not only was the cruel suspense finished for ever, but he had learned his own capacities : he could stick it like the others. And to have the regard, the compassion, of one so great as Neave ! He had suffered, he still suffered, but who would not suffer to become a martyr ? He began to realise, as he pulled the bed-clothes over him, that Spots had not been the minister of a fortune sheerly malignant.

## IV

IN the morning Martin was stiff and sore and began his toilet by examining himself in a looking-glass : when he discovered the havoc that had been wrought he felt very proud of himself and knew that this appearance in the changing-room before football on Monday need cause him no distress : those who wanted to see the damage would have something to look at. The discomfort which he experienced during the day was quite outweighed by his satisfaction at his achievement and fortitude : that he was the first of the new boys to be swiped rendered him in their eyes a distinctly important person. Even Caruth, who always patronised Martin, began to climb down.

The Berneys had midday dinner with the house, and Martin succeeded in catching Mrs Berney as she left the dining-hall.

" I'm very sorry I couldn't come last night," he said, blushing.

" So am I. You must come next Saturday. What kept you ? "

" Oh—er—I had to see one of the prefects," he answered with hesitation.

Mrs Berney, knowing that ' after prayers ' was the

hour of justice, could guess from the boy's manner what had occurred.

"That was a pity," she said kindly. And Martin knew that she knew. He felt prouder and more heroic than ever. Then she added: "Come in after prayers to-morrow night. There won't be anyone there."

"Oh, thank you very much," he said in ecstasy. He had become in a moment the slave and worshipper of Mrs Berney. Afterwards Caruth asked him the subject of his conversation with Mrs B., and he answered: "Oh, nothing." On Monday night he went to the drawing-room and read the odes with which the circle had dealt on Saturday. Mrs Berney gave him cocoa and cake and was entirely charming. As he left her he even thanked heaven for old Spots.

Leopard, on the other hand, was extremely angry with himself. He realised on the following day that he had behaved like a brute: under normal circumstances he would have ragged Martin and told him not to do it again. At the most a mild four would have been considered ample. But eight! It was undeniably excessive. If it had only been someone else it wouldn't have mattered so much (for abstract justice made no great appeal to Spots), but there was that kid slinking about his study and cleaning everything that he could lay hold of with maddening assiduity. Not for a moment could he forget his iniquity. One thing,



however, was certain. It would be quite inconsistent with the dignity of a blood to say anything about what had occurred. So Martin noticed several changes in Spots' demeanour. He was more silent and did not rag him as before : nor did he follow his custom of bringing the Greek prose to Martin on Tuesdays and Fridays. Nobly he toiled at it alone and was roundly abused in form on the following days. But the memory of youth is short and soon they drifted back into the old friendly relations. Martin, however, took good care not to be guilty of further slips, for though he was glad now that he had been swiped, he did not in the least wish it to happen again.

The term ran smoothly on. Caruth was adopted, to his infinite joy, by Cullen and Neave and the youthful nuts, while Martin drifted into more soulful society. He was even taken up in a kindly way by the poet of Borrowdale, who lent him an anthology and used to hold forth to him about men and letters. Martin was very much impressed and could not decide what to think when Spots said the poet was a bilger. To Martin the voice of Spots was still the voice of a god. Later on he heard the poet call Spots 'a piffling Philistine,' but he did not know what it meant and was ashamed to ask. Life began to expand in many directions and new doors pressed themselves on his attention with haunting urgency. On the whole Martin was enjoying his first term.

And so he settled down gladly to the routine. School life is liable to a clearly marked dichotomy ; there is a world of games and a world of work. For Martin both had their pleasure, both their monotony. Football, for instance, distinctly afforded moments. There were seventy minutes of consummate joy while the school, released from the round of "league" games, watched the match with their greatest rival, Ashminster. Martin never forgot that struggle. It was the first school match which he had been able to see, and he had not yet escaped from the age of worship, the age in which every blood is a true Olympian and reveals the deity as he walks. It was tremendous to watch Moore battling in the line-out, or Llewelyn heaving an enemy to the ground, or Raikes, capped now and the undisputed successor to Spots' position on the left wing, go plunging along the touch-line with that long and powerful stride. Martin could even forgive him for ousting Spots when he saw him pick up an opponent by the knees and pitch him a full three yards into touch.

For sixty minutes Martin stood wedged in a mass of shoving, bawling humanity. And he had bawled, bawled till his voice and breath were gone and he saw that he would need all his strength to avoid being barged out of his position in the front row, a treasured post won by a tedious wait. And now the long-drawn roar of 'Schoo-ool' went up almost in despair.

Ashminster were leading by six points to three and Elfrey, with only ten minutes more, were being penned in their own twenty-five. Never had their prospects looked more gloomy: the forwards were losing the ball in the scrummage time after time and only the perfect tackling of the backs kept down the score. Suddenly Ross, on the right wing, intercepted a fumbled pass and was off. Someone shouted: "Kick, man, kick." But this was no moment for safety play, and Ross went on. Not till he was close to the full-back did he kick, and then it was no feeble punt into touch that he made, but a great swinging kick across field. For a moment there was a silence. Then a great roar went up, the greatest roar since the beginning of the match. Raikes, on the left wing, had foreseen the move, and following up with the speed of the wind had magnificently caught the ball and was making for the enemy's undefended line. It was the kind of movement that comes crashing into the mind of the spectator years later on without cause or suggestion just because it is unique.

But he was not over the line yet. Carter, the Ashminster centre, who had captained his school for three years and played for the Harlequins in the holidays, was in desperate pursuit. It was a race from the half-way line and Raikes had five yards' start. Martin, crushed against the ropes, hoarse and gasping, discerned with horror the deadly speed of Carter.

It was growing dark and a November mist was creeping over the great field : impossible to trace that relentless pursuit : one could only wait and listen. A roar went up. Raikes had been collared. The teams gathered round the fallen figures and the referee. At last they parted. Ashminster remained on their line and Armstrong, the Elfrey scrum-half, was bringing out the ball. Raikes had fallen over the line in a central position. The school gave vent to a shout that stirred Mr Foskett to quote Homer on the wounded Ares. Llewelyn of course took the kick. A safe thing, one said. But now, incredibly, he failed. The ball trickled feebly along the ground and a vague moan passed down the ranks.

Six all and five minutes to go. Play settled down near half-way. Both teams were fighting like devils : and still there were found men to go down to the rushes. Then the Ashminster back miskicked in an effort to find touch. Llewelyn had made a mark. It was far off, but he was going to have a shot at goal. As the teams separated and Llewelyn balanced the ball in the half-back's hands, there was silence. Only here and there a muttered voice would be heard as someone strove to relieve the strain by oburgation.

"Callingham, you blighter, don't barge," or : "After you with my feet, Ginger," or : "Hack that stinker Murray, he's oiled up two places."

Then, as Llewelyn took his run and the enemy

charged, there was no sound. The ball went soaring up. He had done it? The mist was ubiquitously damned. Then the touch-judges behind the goals raised their flags, a signal for the greatest roar of all. The match was over, gloriously over. It only remained to charge headlong to the tuck-shop and fight the whole game over again with ham and eggs or the succulent cho-hone.

These were moments.

Football too brought other, more directly personal, moments. There was the occasion when Moore and Spots came down to watch the juniors of Berney's and Martin scored a try beneath their awful gaze. Surely it was the very essence of triumph to see the enemy scowling on their goal-line while Berney's sauntered away with the ball, and to know that he and he alone was responsible for this cleavage of the hosts. Martin walked with all the tremendous humility of glowing pride. It was the first try he had ever scored, and Moore and Spots had seen it.

That evening Moore approached him after prayers.

"Hullo, Leigh," he said. "You scored this afternoon, didn't you?"

"Yes," said Martin, making a desperate effort to conceal his satisfaction.

"Well," answered Moore deliberately, "you hadn't any business to. You're a forward and it isn't your job to cut the scrum and lurk about for the ball. They

were pushing us and it was a mere fluke that they kicked too hard. Anyhow the half could have scored : it was only a matter of going two or three yards. You ought to have been in the middle, shoving like hell. See ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Well, don’t lurk any more, or there’ll be trouble. It isn’t a forward’s business to score tries. Anyone can be a ‘ winger ’ : it takes a man to shove.”

Moore was one of the old school of forwards. He believed in foot-work and read *The Morning Post*.

“ So don’t let me catch you loafing outside the scrum again,” he concluded. “ There’s quite enough chaps doing that already.” And he strolled away.

Moore was not a person of much imagination and he never saw that he was not going the right way to make a great forward. A word of encouragement coming on the top of this, possibly injudicious, success would have made Martin play like a devil. Instead he deliberately slacked for a week.

Indeed footer, in spite of its moments, became monotonous. Martin had to play four and often five times a week in all weathers, and very often the sides were uneven and the game, consequently, a farce, a shivery, cheerless farce in which everyone longed for the pleasant signal for release. By the end of term nobody liked the games and everybody was as sick of the fields as of the classrooms. It was not merely

that the games were too frequent, but that they were scarcely ever treated as games. As the end of the term approached, bringing with it challenge cup matches for old and young, house feeling ran strong and the various teams were goaded by their prefects with relentless severity. Sometimes whole fifteens would be swiped in turn for their failure to win matches, quite irrespective of their capacity to do so : slackness could always be alleged. At Berney's, it was true, no great rigour was displayed. Had Spots been captain more blood might have been shed, but Moore, who directed the house teams, was more lenient and rarely went further than guttural abuse and threats. Being, however, himself a forward, he instituted scrumming practice in the evenings, and Martin found himself being pushed about the house gymnasium at great pain to his ears and limbs, while larger boys planted shrewd and stinging blows on the prominent portions of the losing side : it was no fun being in the back row. As he shoved and groaned in the perspiring mass, there flamed across his mind the remark of a well-meaning aunt : 'How you will enjoy the games !' Martin was not particularly weak or unathletic : his physique and taste for games were quite up to the normal, but he did not stand alone when he proclaimed to his friends his weariness with the official recreation which only doubled life's burden.

"Of course," said Caruth, after scrumming practice

one night, "it's awfully good for us. Bally influence and all that. You know what the crushers say."

"And they ought to know," added Martin, "as they never play, at least not compulsorily."

"Anyhow," said Caruth, "there is one comfort."

"What is that?"

"We don't have to sweat it out like Randall's. Their pre's make them groise at it all day and all night."

"Good job. The stinkers."

Martin's sympathy with the oppressed was not yet as strong as his hatred of Randall's, the pot hunters, the unspeakable.

Work with the Terror was not always terrible: for Martin it even had its moments. He enjoyed turning out a good verse or a good translation, and he enjoyed also the commendation that it won. The Terror, whose real name was Vickers, was a young man soured by misfortune. He had meant to go triumphantly to the Bar: he had connections, he had brains, he would rise. But a financial crisis in the family had left him in despair, too old to enter for the Civil Service, too poor to attempt the Bar in spite of his connections. He had drifted, of necessity, to the arduous, responsible, and despised task of moulding the future generation. The future generation, as represented by the Lower Fifth, Classical, of Elfrey, seemed to Vickers a loathsome crew, fit only to be the victim of the sarcastic tongue on which he prided himself. He hated the elderly



bloods who remained calmly and irremovably at the bottom of the form : he hated the ink-stained urchins with brains who passed through his hands on their way to higher things. The Lower Fifth he held to be an abominable form because it was neither one thing nor the other. The teaching was not mere routine, the soulless cramming of impenetrable skulls : on the other hand, it wasn't like taking a Sixth. There were times, especially in the afternoons, when the frowst of the water-warmed room, the dingy walls and desks, the ponderous horror of mistranslated Æschylus, and the unmannered lumpishness of the human boy (average age sixteen) would all combine to play upon his nerves and to rend the amorphous thing which once had been an active, ambitious soul. Wearily he vented his wrath upon the form.

His method was, as a rule, the sarcasm courteous. He lounged magnificently while he played with his victim.

"Simpson!" This to a clever but idle youth remarkable for his large, inky hands and persistent untidiness of apparel. There was something in Simpson's grimy collars and straggling bootlaces that infuriated Vickers.

"Simpson!"

"Yes, sir?"

"You owe me, I think, a rendering of Virgil."

"Please, sir, I haven't quite finished it yet, sir."

"And how much, may I ask, have you finished?"

"Well, sir, last night I had the Agamemnon chorus."

"I see, Simpson. I see."

"Please, sir, I was very busy."

"Our Simpson was busy early this morning also, I suppose."

"Yes, sir."

"At your ablutions, I presume."

Here the form would laugh: Simpson's cleanliness was a standing joke.

"Please, sir, I didn't wake up very early."

"That was very distressing."

There was a silence. "Well, Simpson?" Vickers would continue in his softest tone.

Simpson gazed moodily at the desk, digging nibs into the wood.

"Our Simpson seems fonder of water than of Maro. We must tighten the bonds between Simpson and the poet. May I say the whole of the first Georgic this time?"

"Oh, sir."

"You think the quantity excessive?"

Simpson summoned up his courage and said he did think so.

"Ah, but the verse is so beautiful," came the answer. "I couldn't deprive you, Simpson. Anyhow, you may begin your *magnum opus* and let me know when you have reached line two hundred."

"Yes, sir."

"Thank you, Simpson, that will be delightful. You were translating, Grant, I think."

Vickers aimed at being a strong man and he never set a grammar paper in which he did not ask for a comment on the phrase:

"Oderint dum metuant."

"A capital sentiment, Simpson," he would say with his gentlest smile, as he mouthed out the words. But his pretensions were not idle, as was shown by the fact that he could lose his temper without becoming ridiculous. If a weaker man had called the giant Batson 'a contemptible ass,' Batson would have laughed and the form would have sniggered. But when Vickers flared up he commanded the silence of the greatest.

Vickers had a gift of phrase and Martin learned much from him, partly because he was so afraid that he always worked hard, and partly because Vickers took a fancy to him and would give him little hints about translation and composition which he did not choose to waste on the ruck. Martin was less inky and more intelligent than the average new boy who was placed in the Lower Fifth. Moreover, his fear of his master was obvious, and there was no more effective method of flattering Vickers than to fear him and to let your fear be seen.

Yet it was a relief, even to Martin, to escape from the tension of the Terror's classroom to the turbulent relaxation that prevailed in the dark chamber

where Barmy Walters taught mathematics. Old Barmy suffered from acute poverty and incipient senile decay. He had once been a brilliant undergraduate at Cambridge and then a wrangler, a man with a future: he now lived in a red-brick villa with a chattering wife and two gaunt, unwedded daughters. For nearly forty years it had been his function to instruct the classical side in mathematics: he had never been a strong man, never fitted for his work. And so in spite of all his brilliance as a mathematician he had missed promotion, seen his chance of a house go by, and eventually lost grip. To retire was financially impossible (Elfrey was too poor a school to have a pension fund), and he stuck to his work grimly, sitting beneath his blackboard with an overcoat under his dusty gown, wheezing and grumbling and looking for his glasses. Plainly he could be ragged: and ragged he was without mercy or cessation. A couple of hours with the Terror had a vicious effect on the tempers of his victims, and Barmy Walters found in the Lower Fifth, coming straight from Vickers, torturers of a fiendish devilry.

To begin with, there was the distribution of the instrument-boxes before geometry. The boxes stood in great piles at the end of the room and it was the duty of the bottom boy to deal them round. It was also part of the established order of things that the bottom boy dropped the two and twenty boxes with a series

of slow and deafening crashes. At the end he would say : " Oh, sir, I'm so sorry."

And Barmy would answer : " Um, ah. Really, really, you boys will shatter my nerves. How many times have I told you to be careful ? Um, ah ! "

Then there would be a rush to recover the boxes, a long, clattering rush with much jostling and swearing and spilling of ink, some of which would find its way to Barmy's glass of water. When peace had been restored people would begin to ask questions, to demand elaborate demonstrations on the blackboard, or to consume food. Barmy's room was renowned as a resort for picnics. Biscuits were popular in winter, but in summer there was a special line in fruit. Once a daring individual threw a biscuit at Barmy's head and hit him, whereupon he had to carry to his house-master a note which began :

" DEAR RANDALL,—Morgan struck me with a macaroon."

- The conjunction of the words 'strike' and 'macaroon' so pleased Mr Randall that he omitted to deal with Morgan.

All the obvious things were done to Barmy by one or other of his classes. Mice were brought into form and released, and once a grass snake. He found a hedgehog in his mortar-board. Barmy had an idea

that fifty lines formed a long imposition and he used to whine out :

“Um, ah, boy, I’ll give you a long day’s work. Take fifty lines.”

He would enter the imposition in a note-book which he left in his unlocked desk, and in the morning he would find ‘shown up’ written against it in his own handwriting. After a long day of wheezing and grumbling about his shattered nerves Barmy would be seen mounting his aged bicycle with fixed wheel and pedalling laboriously to the villa and the chattering wife and the gaunt, unwedded daughters. Yet perhaps he was not altogether unhappy, for, if a master is to be ragged, he may as well sink to the depths : the tragedy of the defenceless dotard has less pathos than the suffering of the young man with ideals, whose burning desire to teach well and to succeed is thwarted by just the slightest lack of that presence and authority which make the master.

Undoubtedly, however, Barmy could be hurt, and Martin was not old enough to understand the consummate brutality of the proceedings in that dismal room. Like all young schoolboys, Martin regarded a master or crusher as a natural foe, a person with whom truceless war is waged. If he is fool enough to let himself be ragged, that is his look-out : he has all the resources of punishment on his side and if he cannot use them he deserves no mercy. So Martin worked off

his vitality in ragging, and, being of an ingenious turn of mind, became noted for the improvisation of new japes. He was patronised by the bloods of the form and enjoyed himself hugely : without realising the nature and results of his conduct, he even lay awake at nights devising new and exquisite methods for completing the destruction of Barmy's nervous system.

## V

EVERY school, even so modern a foundation as Elfrey, has its traditional rows, its stories of rags perpetrated on a colossal scale by the heroes of old : but the modern schoolboy finds that, like fights, they don't happen. Martin's life moved calmly on and its monotony was only broken by sundry interludes, painful or humorous, with masters or prefects. Still, ragging old Barmy was tame enough and only once was he involved in a genuine row, an affair that counted and was history for several years. Partly because it was his only rag, and partly because it chanced to occur in his first term, while he was still very impressionable, the memory remained with him clearly and for ever. It is true also that he played a part in the drama and even was responsible for its name, so naturally he remembered that notable December night with its comradeship and perils and glorious achievement.

The end of term, so exasperating to the harried teacher, brings exhilaration to the taught. As Christmas approached Martin found prefectorial discipline slackening and, though exams might mean harder work in school, there was in the house a very agreeable



relaxation of tension. Even games were taken less seriously, and one or two of the more audacious spirits actually cut without detection. But just as Berney's began to slacken their reins, Randall's, the neighbouring house, became more vigorous than usual: for Randall's were in the final of the "footer pot."

Berney's always objected to Randall's. This animosity might have been accounted for by the mere fact of neighbourship, but there was more in it than that. As was Athens to Sparta, so was Berney's house to Randall's. Berney's stood always for an easy-going tolerance and, though, for instance, it was not a particularly well-dressed house, it left its nuts in peace. In all its pursuits it was either brilliant or ineffectual, and, if it did anything at all, it did it beautifully: both in games and work it was a house of individuals. A typical batsman from Berney's would make three divine, soul-satisfying cuts and be caught in attempting an impossible fourth: Berney's was never thorough and never took defeat to heart.

Randall's, on the other hand, had no nuts and suspected with Draconian severity the faintest traces of nuttishness. The average member of the house was tall and lumpy and sallow, badly dressed and with no grease to his hair. It was a standing joke with the school that Randall's youths owed their yellow faces not only to general unhealthiness, but also to a

dislike of soap and water. They trained like professionals and made tin gods of their challenge cups. They worked always with a dull, sickening energy : they never had a decent three-quarter among them, but won their matches by working the touch-line and scoring from forward rushes. Yet undoubtedly, despite all their ignorance of the way things should be done, they achieved results.

Of course Berney's hated Randall's bitterly and for ever. But towards the end of term relations became more strained than was usual. To begin with, Randall's had defeated Berney's by thirty-five points to three in the first round of the footer pot. Once Spots had romped away, but for the rest of the match the heavy Randallite scrum had kept the ball close and pushed their light opponents all over the field. And Randall's juniors had crowed over their triumph, had hailed every fresh try with much shouting and throwing up of caps (it was generally held that gentlemen showed their joy by reasonable yelling and that only a low soccer crowd would hurl their caps into the air), and behaved as offensively as could be expected. Now Randall's prepared to win the final as though the future of the world rested on their efforts, while Berney's jeered from study windows or the house yard. So Randall's sulked and refused to send back balls which were kicked over into their yard, and Berney's had to scale walls secretly to recover their property.

Nor did they always succeed. But the actual cause of open hostilities was the affair of Gideon.

Gideon's real name was Edward Spencer Lewis-Murray. Some reader of Mr Eden Phillpotts had called him Gideon because he was dark and had a large nose. Whether or not he was a Jew is immaterial. Certainly he not only went to school chapel, but consumed ham in large quantities. One day he had been ragged about his nose and straightway he marched to the tuck-shop, ordered an unparalleled amount of ham and pork sausages (for he was wealthy) and devoured the entire feast before a large assembly. His capacity was enormous, and he thus gained two ends at once: he demonstrated his loathing of Jewish practices and established an undoubted record in consumption.

His nose, however, was certainly large, and the name of Gideon clung to him: but he took his ragging sensibly, and, while remaining a butt, he became, in a way, popular. So when, a few days before the end of term, he was shamefully mishandled by some members of Randall's the Berneyites were furious and Gideon became temporarily a martyr and a hero. He had kicked a football into Randall's yard: then, having shouted "Thank you" in vain, he had climbed over the wall to look for it. Shouts of "Gideon," "Berney's Yiddisher," "Jew-beak," "Back to Joppa you dirty Jew-ew," and lastly a great roar of "Stone the dirty Semite" had been heard. And Gideon had

not returned. He had, it turned out, been ceremoniously stoned—that is to say, he had been lashed to a pillar in Randall's house gym, and pounded with footballs thrown hard from a distance of five yards. Then he had been stripped and thoroughly washed in cold water : they had, he said, made jokes about Jordan and total immersion. He reappeared just before tea, raging and very battered. All through the meal his nose bled profusely and it was a sign of the times that no one made jokes, the old, inevitable jokes, about Gideon's 'konk.'

Berney's discussed the affair with animation. Jew or no Jew, Gideon was of Berney's and as such he deserved respectful treatment. The workroom seethed with wrath and Gideon revelled in hospitalities hitherto undreamed of. Even Cullen and Neave stooped from their heights and actually led the wail of sympathy.

"The swine," said Neave. "Forty of 'em lamming into one poor devil."

"Jaundiced Bible-bangers," said Cullen. "I suppose they're praying now for that mangy pot."

It was a traditional jest that Randall's had house prayers before cup matches to invoke heavenly aid for their team.

"Let's hope Smith puts it across them."

There was a chorus of approval.

"My sainted aunt," Neave went on. "Can't we do something?"

“What?”

“Can’t we avenge our Gideon?”

It was then that Martin, standing timidly on the outskirts of the crowd and drinking in every word of the great ones, remarked boldly:

“For Gideon and the Lord.”

He raised a roar of laughter. The school had been working at Judges that term in divinity and the story of Gideon was familiar to all. Martin’s allusion to the Israelites’ act of revenge was distinctly opportune. The ringing of the prep bell abruptly ended the conversation.

On the following day Randall’s put it across Smith’s, scoring twenty-eight points to nil. Again the victory was due to forward rushes.

“Not a decent movement in the match,” said Spots angrily to Martin. “It’s scandalous that the pot can be won by a pack of well-drilled louts.”

Randall’s began to stink in the nostrils of the whole school, for their elation at their successes was always characteristic. They revelled with a serious, unconvincing revelry. Other houses always celebrated the occasion by demanding and obtaining ices (in mid-December) at the school tuck-shop: it was a tradition and a noble one. Randall’s gorged themselves with lumps of bread and ham.

Martin happened to walk back to Berney’s just behind Cullen and Neave. He would not have spoken

to them had they not turned and addressed him. It was condescension, and he appreciated it.

“Hullo,” said Cullen. “What about old Gideon?”

“I don’t know,” answered Martin. “Can’t anything be done?”

“Possibly. Do you remember what you said last night?”

“For Gideon and the Lord?”

“Yes.”

“What about it?”

“We’ll let you know in dormy to-night.”

“Good. That’s ripping.”

Proceedings in the lower dormy that evening were unusual. Silence was called and then Neave read from the book of Judges:

“And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the torches in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow withal: and they cried, The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon.”

Then he continued: “That, my brethren, is the text. And what is its lesson for us here in a community such as ours?” There was a laugh, for he was beautifully constructing a lay sermon on Foskett’s lines. “Only to avenge our Gideon very mightily with pitchers. To-morrow night, as you may know, is the last night of term and our brothers next door” (Cries of “Swine” and counter-cries of “Order”) “will hold a supper to celebrate

their triumph in the playing-field. Now it is a good tradition of the Public Schools and a byword among clean-living Englishmen" (Laughter, for it was sheer Foskett) "that we do pass the last night of term in what my form master would call—*thorubos*. A Greek word, O Stinkers of the Modern Side. My brothers, it is up to us to infect Randall's with *thorubos* or disorder. (Cheers and a voice, "What about pitchers?")."

"Ah, my young friend, you hit the nail on its head. As everybody knows, to get on to Randall's gym is as easy as falling downstairs. From there you can get to the fire ladders and up to Randall's dormies. To-morrow night it is proposed to invade the dormies while the whole house gorges below and listens to slush about their pestilential pots. Meanwhile we snitch their water jugs and empty the water on their little beds. Then we bring the jugs back here and wait. The windows on this side of the dormy look out on the zinc roof of Randall's gym: beyond is the dining-room, where the swine will be guzzling. With windows open we can easily hear what's going on. When old Toffee Randall gets up to propose his blighted house" (Neave had in his excitement sunk from the level of the lay sermon) "I move that we chuck all the empty jugs on that zinc roof and shout: 'For Gideon and the Lord.' There ought to be row enough to raise hell. You know what those roofs are . . . and there will be forty pitchers. They won't have the least notion what the row is till

they get upstairs and see their beds. They'll think it's a private rag of our own, but they'll learn in due time. Now don't anyone say a word. We've got to keep this to our dormy or the pre's are bound to find out."

The hurried arrival of Spots, followed by the extinction of the lights, put an end to further devising of conspiracy. For a long time Martin lay awake, gazing at the ceiling and turning restlessly from side to side. Excitement, that terrible mingling of sheer joy and sheer terror, gripped him, almost physically: as he thought of the splendours and the perils of to-morrow night he felt as he had felt before when he was walking down the study passage to the prefects' common-room and listening to Spots's following tread. What, he wondered, would be the end of it all? There would be a row, inevitably. They might even be kept back a day: that would be wretched. But swiping? He could endure that for the glory of sharing in a rag, a colossal rag with Neave and Cullen as leaders. Besides he hated Randall's, hated them so bitterly that the prospect of soaking their beds and smashing their pitchers was heavenly even at the cost of swipings innumerable. Nowhere is group feeling more obvious and more powerful than in the world of youth. In a single term Martin had become so passionately one of Berney's that his hatred of Randall's and their smudgy type of success made him quiver with anger. He didn't care a straw for Gideon's nose: nobody really



cared for Gideon's sufferings. They were all linked by the single bond of hatred.

It was Randall's that mattered . . . the swine.

Naturally the last night of term was not distinguished for its discipline. There was, of course, no prep, and the dormitories were open for packing. Consequently it was not difficult for twelve members of the lower dormy to creep out when Randall's had settled down to their gorge and to range themselves along the gym roof. It was beautifully dark and dry : fortune was helping the cause of Gideon and the right. Neave and Cullen were to ascend the fire-escape and enter Randall's two dormies, one taking each. They were to go through the cubicles, removing the jugs, soaking the beds, and handing out the empty pitchers to others who passed them quietly down a line of waiting figures. This seemed the best, the quietest method of transport. Ultimately all the jugs would be awaiting in Berney's lower dormy the great moment of Toffee Randall's speech. Martin formed one of the hidden line and shivered for half-an-hour on the roof of Randall's gym while he passed jugs carefully along. Never in all his life had he known a night like this. He was thrilled by the sense of comradeship in danger and the knowledge that he was working in the company of great ones, working for the pain and humiliation of Randall's. Never did he forget the supreme exhilaration of that night attack : the climbing in the dark, the

whispers, the nervous strain, the dread of blundering and betraying his party, the intolerable waiting. Each movement of the trees in Randall's garden made him think that the conspirators had been noticed and that someone was coming.

At length every bed had been duly drenched and forty pitchers had been silently transferred to Berney's lower dormy. Each member of the dormitory took two jugs, and four of them had three. Then they waited. They could see down into the lighted windows of Randall's dining-hall where the enemy feasted; but the supper was drawing to its end. By the resounding chorus of "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow" they knew that Toffee Randall was "up" for the last speech of the evening. When the singing and cheering were over Randall began his oration. At the same moment Neave gave the signal. Everyone in Berney's lower dormy cried aloud, "For Gideon and the Lord," and, as they cried, forty pitchers crashed on the zinc roof of Randall's gymnasium. No one, not even the manipulators of three jugs, had failed or been late. There was but one cry and one crash: and there on the zinc roof lay myriad morsels of china, glittering in the half light thrown from the windows of either house. The noise had been terrific, the effect stupendous.

It was in the true spirit of the saga.

A moment later Spots dashed into the room. "What the devil's all that row?" he roared.

Everyone was peacefully in his cubicle, putting the last touch to his packing or getting into bed.

"Randall's trying to be funny," suggested Neave.

"But didn't you shout?"

"Well, we helped a bit. That din would have made anyone squeal. Randall's must have been breaking china for the sake of their dirty pot. They are swine."

Spots looked baffled. The row had been tremendous, yet here everybody was calm and quiet. It must have been Randall's, but they were still at their supper. It was amazing, it was a miracle. To save his face he returned to his study.

Meanwhile it was ascertained that, after some confusion, Toffee Randall had continued his speech: then they heard the long-drawn, surging roar of "Auld Lang Syne." It took Randall's twenty minutes to finish "Auld Lang Syne."

"The swine," said Neave. He said it often, but he said it beautifully, with a whining drawl of contempt. "Just wait till they get to their dormies."

So they waited, and presently the pandemonium began. Randall's were discovering that not a bed had escaped, not a jug remained. As they looked out of their windows on to the gym roof they realised the full meaning of the battle-cry and the crash that had startled them at their supper.

"Water, water everywhere," cried Cullen in ecstasy as he heard the tumult rising in the neighbouring house.

Randall's, flushed rather with insolence than the weak claret-cup of their supper, bellowed in their dormitories and shouted from their windows: after all none but Berney's could have done the deed. It was sheer joy for Berney's as they listened: wisely they made no answer and Randall's cried aloud in vain.

Again Spots came into the lower dormy. "What are Randall's shouting about?" he asked.

"Joy of life," said Neave. "The swine."

"Well they needn't yell at us."

"They've got no manners, Leopard."

Spots advised his dormy to take no notice of the creatures and again went out.

Shortly before midnight Mr Randall rang at Mr Berney's front door and demanded an interview with the master of the house. Berney came down in his dressing-gown: he was very tired and his eyes ached. He was promptly informed by his raging neighbour that his house had disgraced itself, and he listened to a strange story of soaked beds and broken pitchers. "Must have been your boys," Randall ended fiercely. "The jugs couldn't be thrown on to my gym except from your dormitories. There has been an invasion. It's scandalous."

"But what evidence have you?" asked Berney, who hated Randall as only one housemaster can hate another.

"It's obvious, man, obvious. Jealousy. Footer cup.

My boys were at supper when the crash was heard : and your boys shouted, I heard them. Besides, would my people soak their beds ? I demand an inquiry. I shall go to Foscett. Your boys shall be kept back a day."

This roused Berney, whose nerves were already strained with fatigue and worry.

"I entirely decline," he said sharply, "to board my boys for an extra day to please you. I shall put the matter in the hands of my prefects. If that doesn't satisfy you, go to Foscett by all means. You won't get much out of him at this time of night : he's probably more tired than I am. If my prefects find that my boys——"

"There's no 'if,'" said Randall.

"If they find that we're responsible," Berney continued icily, "the jugs shall be paid for and the guilty punished. Good-night." And he led Randall to the door.

Randall was renowned for his temper and his powers of self-expression in school. But now he was sublimely speechless.

Berney held a nocturnal consultation with his form prefects. They all smiled as the tale was told. Spots even roared with laughter.

"Er, Leopard," said Berney, "this is—er—a serious matter," and then he broke down and laughed himself. He and Randall had never hit it off.

Spots told Berney of the suspicious innocence of the lower dormitory. Moore had been on duty all the evening in the upper room so that its inhabitants were certainly not guilty. The prefects marched in a body to the lower dormy. "Look here, you chaps," said Spots, "it's all up about this jug business. It was done here. Who are the culprits?"

Simultaneously every boy left his cubicle and said: 'Guilty.' It was a triumph of organisation. Neave had foreseen that detection was inevitable and had determined that, up to the very end, the dormy should display its solidarity.

"Well," said Spots, "you'd better all come down to the pre's room."

So shortly before one o'clock eighteen boys in dressing-gowns, led by Cullen and Neave in garments of great colour and splendour, went down to the prefects' common-room. There was just room for all.

Neave had to tell the whole story: he told it simply and well, duly emphasising the Biblical aspect.

"Berney has left the matter with the prefect," said Moore, who was suffering tortures from a half-thwarted desire to laugh.

"You'll have to pay for the jugs next term. Randall wants you to be kept back, but Berney wouldn't hear it. Anyhow, it's been a grave breach of discipline" (here he saw the impenetrable solemnity of Neave's face and

almost broke down), "grave breach of discipline. Yes. You're to have four each."

Martin sighed with relief, for he had expected eight. They were taken to the house gym, where space was ample, and with all four prefects at work the business was soon over. They were even allowed to keep on their dressing-gowns. Never had swiping been so farcical or so inefficient. When they were all back in their cubicles Spots came in.

"I'd have given a great deal," he said, "not to have been a pre to-night. It seems to me that we have scored off Randall's. Gentlemen, I congratulate you, and I sincerely hope that no one has been hurt by our recent ministration."

They assured him that they had not suffered. And then, because they were all going away very early the next morning, it was decided, with Spots's permission, to abandon sleep. Gideon had to make a speech and offer thanks for the public revenge: and stories were told interminably.

Martin, as he lay half asleep, came to the conclusion that life's burden was exquisite. It wasn't only that the holidays began to-morrow: the night's achievement had been perfect. There is something essentially satisfying to human nature in the lavish destruction of property: with joy we watch the havoc wrought by the cinema comedian or the pantomime knockabout, and with joy the patron of fairs smashes the bottles in

a rifle-range. Martin revelled in the thought that forty pitchers lay shattered and shimmering on the zinc roof below him. And now, more than ever, he felt the pleasures of comradeship. Randall's had been humiliated: Berney's had triumphed. It was for him far the most significant fact of his first term that he had taken part in an enterprise worthy to be recounted for ever in Berney's. He was proud of his dormy, for it had worked as one man. Above all, he was proud of Neave, the contriver, the leader of men. Even now he was saying:

"We've put it across them, the swine."

Then Spots said: "For Gideon and the Lord. It was a great notion. Who thought of it?"

"Young Leigh gave the name," said Neave.

"Good for you, Leigh," shouted Spots. "You're keeping up the reputation of the Leopard's den."

Naturally that seemed to Martin the supreme moment of the whole superb affair.



## VI

At one o'clock in the afternoon of December the twentieth a motor car left Tavistock station and tore fiercely westward until it reached the excellent village of Cherton Widger. Then it panted up an abrupt hill and, passing a lodge, ran up a short drive to The Steading, a square low-roofed house surrounded by irreproachable lawns that sloped away to the coverts. The chauffeur descended and carried on to the steps a portmanteau and a corded play-box. Martin, looking uncouthly smart in a new overcoat (with a strap behind) and a bowler hat, stood rather nervously by the door. He had come home for the holidays.

In the hall he met his aunt. He kissed her : or rather she kissed him. His uncle burst out of his study and shook hands with him : his cousin Margaret, aged fifteen, also appeared and shyly shook hands. It seemed that his cousin Robert, aged seventeen, would not escape from Rugby till to-morrow. Everybody began to ask him questions which he mechanically answered.

"You must have left Elfrey very early," said his aunt.

"About seven."

“And in December too ! Had you got to ?”

“No ; but everybody does.”

These well-meaning people did not realise that you do not stay at school after term has ended. Though you perish with cold and lack of sleep, the first possible train is the only train. Martin had secured an hour's sleep, breakfasted at six, and caught his train at seven. All the way to Exeter he had smoked. About this smoking he had felt afraid, for here was another new experience : but everyone else in the carriage had smoked and there was no escape. One of the boys had dealt in cigars, another produced a pipe which he cleaned extensively and smoked but little. Martin had kept with the majority to cigarettes and had laboured to disguise the swift nervous action of the novice beneath the languid air of the connoisseur. One thing at any rate was certain : he had not been sick. By the time he reached Exeter he was feeling a little queer, but with a supreme effort he had staved off a disaster which would have been fatal to his reputation. And now he was intensely hungry and found cold chicken and ham a very pleasant substitute for the 'roast or boiled' with which the board of Berney's was laden. It was heavenly to sit once more in a comfortable chair in a fire-warmed room and to have chicken and fresh bread and lemonade.

Martin was an orphan. His guardian, John Berrisford, to whose house he had just come, was his mother's

brother. His father had been most things to most men, and despite, or possibly because of, his very considerable ability he had achieved a rich versatility in failure. He had started by being a captain of industry, or perhaps a sub-lieutenant would be a more accurate description; but his complete inability to remain awake in the office between the hours of two and four had put a sudden end to his commission. On parting from his general he had said:

“It’s no use your getting chaps from the varsity to give the show tone. They won’t work till they have had their tea.” The general had sworn and taken his advice.

Richard Leigh then discovered that he had been so damnably well educated that there was nothing for him to do but think. So he thought and wrote and went hungry. Now and then, to give his creditors a run for their money, he became a commission agent or an architect or a producer of plays. But he never paid very much in the pound. At the time when he met Joan Berrisford, a young woman of property, he was once more engaged in thought. She was beginning to feel the need of permanence in her life and was quickly interested in his work and the giant despair which he swore was the greatest of his creations. Virginity bored her: Richard attracted her: possibly her conscience stung her: for she was suddenly struck by the idea that she might repay society for her dividends by rescuing for society an artist whom it didn’t want.

Nowadays this would seem reasonable enough, because we don't believe in democracy any longer and shower divine rights on anyone who chooses to call himself an intelligent minority and make himself sufficiently objectionable: but at the time when the incident occurred Joan Berrisford was certainly thinking in advance of her age. Everybody said she was a fool to pay any attention to the creature, for she came of the class that thinks every artist has necessarily something wrong with him. Only her brother John pointed out that Joan's husband was, primarily, Joan's affair, and then, to her intense delight, he had added that he didn't care twopence whom she married as long as the rest of the family hated him.

The marriage was a success. Richard threw off his despair and gave society some excellent books of which it took no notice. They lived in Italy, and there Martin was born. When he was only eight his mother died suddenly and his father came to London. He had been left comfortably off by his wife, but after her death the old restlessness returned: he gave up writing and gambled gracefully on the Stock Exchange—that is to say, he bore his continual losses with an exquisite nonchalance. Martin used to go to a day school and was enabled by his brains and some sound teaching to win a good scholarship at Elfrey. Then in August his father had succumbed to a long illness and the boy was left to the guardianship of his uncle, John

Berrisford, to whom Richard Leigh had written the following letter :

DEAR JOHN, You are the only one of my relations by blood or marriage with whom neither Joan nor I ever quarrelled. And so, just because you left us alone, I can't leave you alone. I want you to be Martin's guardian, in case this illness should do for me : you have seen something of him and I know you like him. There is no home in the world to which I would sooner entrust my son than yours. I have only a thousand pounds and I want him to be decently educated. You have a family and I should hate to think that I was burdening you. So you must just go for the capital : he has a good scholarship at Elfrey and ought to get one at Oxford. In that case the thousand pounds ought just to see him through. It's plainly no use investing for fifty pounds a year. Don't encourage him to be an artist : he can't afford it. Besides it's a poor life to be a wanderer when you're old, and that's what he would be without money. If he seems inclined for safety and the Civil Service, let him take his chance. Anyhow I trust you absolutely. Yours ever,

RICHARD LEIGH.

So Martin had spent the last three weeks of his summer holiday at The Steading and thither he had now returned.

John Berrisford was a round, ruddy little man who

was too English to be like Napoleon and too Napoleonic to be like an English squire. In all matters of theory, especially moral and political, he was fiercely progressive, in all matters of taste a conservative. He combined revolutionary fervour with a strong belief in old customs, old cheese, and old wine. He ran a small estate on which he gave his labourers a twenty-shilling minimum, decent cottages, and free beer on festal occasions, and to the grief of the neighbouring farmers he made it pay. Sport of all kinds attracted him, and on Saturdays in the autumn and winter he would bring down partridges and pheasants with remarkable certainty, but he was sufficiently logical not to cap his battues by going to church on the following day. He made friends with everybody and was criticised by the squires for being a rebel and by the rebels, of whom the village had two, for being a squire. This amused him intensely and his first answer to all criticism was a drink. Then he would start out magnificently to justify his position. "I get the best of everything," he said, and meant it.

Martin, of course, missed his father's companionship : they had lived on very intimate terms and the customary limitations of the parental relationship had been broken through. But it is the privilege of youth to forget easily, and it was fortunate for Martin that almost directly after his father's death he should have been plunged into a new world, a world whose thronging

cares and pleasures gave few moments for reflection. By the time he had returned to The Steading his personality had so grown and developed that he was freed from painful memories and able to enjoy his holidays.

The Berrisfords were people of sound sense, and seeing what manner of boy he was made no effort to entertain him. Robert, the son at Rugby, was seventeen and a prefect, so that Martin was afraid of him and kept aloof: of Margaret, as a girl, he was naturally shy. He preferred to wander alone in the fields and coverts, now marking the ways of bird and beast, now plotting out his future and building up strange fantasies of thought. Ever since he had been a tiny boy he had played with himself a game of imagination in which he fused his personality with that of a mysterious hero called Daniel. Always when he got into bed he would become Daniel until he fell asleep and in imagination he would go through great adventures and sufferings and triumphs. Daniel was very strong and brave and perfect: perhaps Martin had been influenced by Henty's heroes. Daniel's life varied with Martin's own vicissitudes. When Martin read Ballantyne, Daniel was the son of a trapper and wrought wonderful deeds among the Esquimaux and Redskins on the shores of Hudson's Bay: when Martin was under his father's influence he abandoned trapping and came home to write wonderful books about grizzly bears:

when Martin's thoughts were centred on his preparatory school, Daniel had laboured at the verbs in -*μι* and been the finest athlete in the land. At Elfrey, Daniel had suffered an eclipse, as always happened when Martin had anything very much to think about : at Berney's he had either been tired enough to fall asleep immediately or else he had had something on his mind, to-morrow's repetition, an order of Leopard's, or a game of football. And, besides, Martin had reflected that such methods of amusement as the 'Daniel game' were childish and quite incompatible with the dignity of a Public School boy. But at The Steading the temptation to restore Daniel to life became very urgent and Martin at length swallowed his scruples. While he lay in his bed or wandered in the woods he would become Daniel once more, a Daniel at Elfrey, a prodigious Daniel, who surpassed all records in popularity, played stand-off half for the school at the age of fourteen, endured the most tremendous swipings without a moan or a movement, and was irresistible at every game he took up.

Mrs Berrisford was somewhat distressed by Martin's solitary walks and quiet ways and made several efforts to draw him from his shell. But she made the mistake of trying to base the conversation on his experiences at school and the result was not encouraging.

"And who is your form master?" she began one evening.



"Chap called Vickers."

"Is he nice?"

"Oh, he's all right. Bit of a terror sometimes."

"Does he go for you?"

"Not for me very much."

A pause. "And what's Mr Berney like? Do you get on with him?"

"Oh, he's all right."

"Do you like the house?"

"Yes; it's quite all right."

"Have you any special friends?"

"No one in particular. I like most of the chaps."

"How do you get on with football?"

"Fairly well."

And then she gave it up. Without being openly rude Martin had made it plain that he was not to be bolted from his earth of modified optimism.

When Martin had gone to bed John Berrisford pointed out to his wife that she had taken the wrong line. "Martin is just old enough and wise enough to be thoroughly self-conscious," he said. "He resents questions about school because he thinks you're regarding him as a schoolboy and playing down to him. Talk to him about Botticelli or Free Trade or Beerbohm Tree."

"What nonsense," said Mrs Berrisford. "He's only fourteen. It's just shyness."

But on the following morning she took her

husband's advice and found that, as usual, he was right.

There was a good collection of books in the house and Martin was allowed to pick and choose. John Berrisford suffered some anxiety from the problem of free choice: he was not concerned about the boy's morality; because he knew that no power in the world can alter human nature. So when he noticed that Martin took down *Tom Jones* and read only a portion of it, and later on paid great heed to *The Sentimental Journey*, he had the good sense to say nothing at all. What worried him was the fear that Martin would read many really good things before he was able to appreciate them and might thus be prevented or prejudiced from reading them in after life. For instance, when Martin struggled with Robert Louis Stevenson and called him dull, his uncle knew well enough what was wrong. On the other hand, he dreaded dictating a course of reading or advising the boy in any way, for he knew the value of spontaneous selection and remembered the vivid loathing which he himself had felt for 'advised' books and the infinite lure of the forbidden fruit. So he discreetly held his peace, hoping that Martin would be able to return to Stevenson without prejudice.

A few days before the end of the holidays the whole family went up to town to see the theatres. Martin was old enough to appreciate the pantomime and would have sat there till three in the morning readily. He was

bored by the interminable ballet and the garish medley of flashing lights and countless colours which most of the audience liked so much, but the comedians and the more humorous scenic effects he found perfect. Besides, as a Public School boy and grown-up person, he had to admire Robinson Crusoe when, in gleaming fur-trimmed tights, he, or rather she, so irresistibly sang :

“Somebody wants me surely,  
Some heart bleeds for mine.”

No less fascinating was the comedienne with her : ‘Cupid got a Bull that Time,’ and the comic man’s triumph : ‘There are Lots of Funny Things about a Clothes-Line.’

At last the end came and Martin went to meet the special to Elfrey. He was afraid that his uncle and aunt were making a great mistake in proposing to see him off. He wondered whether it was done, whether you could possibly appear on the platform surrounded by relations. As usual his fears were not justified and he found the station full of mothers and sisters. Everything went well, and as they walked through the crowd Martin noticed a group of bloods with Leopard in their midst. Spots saw him and greeted him quite effusively. It was a tremendous moment, and afforded Martin a fine thrill of pride.

“Who was that ?” asked his aunt.

“Oh, that was Leopard. He’s a pre at Berney’s. An awful blood, and ripping too.”

Somehow or other he had never informed the Berrisfords that he did menial work or wrote Greek prose for another.

Then he came across Cullen and Neave, resplendent with white spats and yellow canes. They too were ready to greet him, almost as if he were one of their chosen circle.

“Got a seat?” said Neave.

“No.”

“Well come into our carriage. We want to get a gang of Berney’s. Two swine from Randall’s had the cheek to shove their bags in here, but when they sloped away to get papers we plugged their stuff into the guard’s van and now they can’t find their carriage. You’d better bag a pew here.”

This was fame and ecstasy indeed. Martin hurriedly said good-bye to his uncle and aunt and made certain of his place in Neave’s carriage. When the train had left the station they settled down to talk and for a splendid half-hour they refought the battle of the pitchers. Then they talked theatres and ultimately the more experienced told of amorous conquests. Martin had been content to listen for the most part and now he relapsed into complete silence. He supposed there must be something in this girl business, though as yet he didn’t understand. But he was not unhappy. He sat with the forefinger and thumb of his right hand in his waistcoat pocket and felt the milled edges of two

sovereigns which his uncle had just given him. Two pounds, forty shillings, four hundred and eighty pence ! He possessed the equivalent of one hundred and sixty poached eggs or two hundred and forty ham rolls. It was a ravishing thought.

## VII

SCHOLARS, like nations, are happiest when they have no history : judged by that standard, both Elfrey School and Berney's house must have been fortunate. Everything ran smoothly and Martin flourished in mind and body. He not only reached the Upper Sixth in the shortest possible time, but also played with average success in his house teams. Without being a brilliant scholar, he always did sound work : without being a born athlete, he could easily hold his own among boys of his size and age. Generally speaking, he had no adventures. Beyond a few petty rows with masters and prefects, such rows as fall inevitably to the lot of all, be they sinners or saints, he pursued an even course and found in life a quite tolerable combination of boredom and excitement. His main interest consisted now, as before, in discoveries.

Religion is always a field for engrossing, if unprofitable, exploration. Until the time arrived for his confirmation Martin had adopted the average position of his kind. He had taken everything for granted, but his acceptance had implied neither strength of faith nor the application of faith to the phenomena of workaday existence. During chapel he had chanted the psalms and sung the

hymns when the music or his own mood encouraged him to do so. Hymns like 'Fight the good fight,' which offered an opportunity for a good, throat-bursting yell, he had always enjoyed: his young emotions had at times been touched by the more sentimental tunes and he found 'For all Thy saints' peculiarly affecting. He was not so impassive as the average Elfreyan who could easily forget the sermons of the Reverend Frank Adair, the one master who had the courage to let himself go when he preached and the ability to gain his effect. Adair could grip Martin and make him feel a very weak vessel. Foskett delivered an address from time to time, exhortations, as a rule, on the duties of a gentleman and the traditions of school life. As he never dealt with concrete instances or dabbled, as did one or two preachers, in thrilling casuistry of the study or the cricket field, no one paid much attention to his high-pitched voice and rapt expression. During the repetition of prayers Martin's thoughts wandered to secular subjects, prep, and games, and So-and-so's chances of a cap: and he knew, as he gazed at the long rows of kneeling figures, that nineteen out of twenty minds were engaged upon the same topics.

Most boys took confirmation very much as a matter of form, as something you had done to you at some time or another. Perhaps they prayed a little longer at night, for it was the custom to say prayers, and the traditional shoe, had it been flung, would more prob-

ably have been aimed at the shirker than the devotee. But otherwise they were unaffected. Martin took a deeper interest because he had listened closely to an address in which there had been almost a definite promise that the first Communion would bring a gift, a spiritual reality about which no mistake could be made. He was curious to discover what exactly this gift was and how it would feel to be filled with the Holy Ghost. So he awaited with more enthusiasm than most the day of his strengthening in the Church.

Confirmation stirred him because the bishop spoke warmly and, as bishops go, sensibly. But first Communion was a disappointment. He had expected so much, he had looked forward with so tense a curiosity to the receiving of a priceless and unknown gift, and he had to admit that he felt exactly as he had felt before. It couldn't be, he decided, his own faith that was lacking, for he had gone to the sacrament in perfect confidence about the blessing that was to come, and he resolved to continue his search for the truth and the help that it would bring. So for two terms he attended the Communion with fair regularity. But still nothing happened, the promise seemed to him unfulfilled, and he came to the conclusion that it was no use going on. For the future he lay in bed on Sunday mornings and listened to the faithful washing and groping for their studs. The position of the sceptic had, after all, its consolations.



In course of the following holidays he discovered among some paper-covered books of his uncle's a three-penny copy of Blatchford's *God and My Neighbour*. He read it through almost without a break, for he had just reached the necessary stage to appreciate it. The short, stabbing sentences and the obvious goodwill of the author made a great impression upon him, and he was thrilled by the peroration and flaming appeal for a world set free from kings and priests and all such evil-doers. He caught the spirit of the book at once and read it aloud to himself, rejoicing :

“‘Rightly or wrongly, I am for reason against dogmas, for evolution against revolution : for humanity always : for earth, not heaven : for the holiest trinity of all—the trinity of man, woman, and child.’”

“This,” he thought, “is literature.”

And then the final thunderclap : “‘Let the holy have their heaven. I am a man, and an Infidel. And this is my apology. Besides, gentlemen, Christianity is not true.’”

Martin saw it all now : Christianity was not true : it was a lie and a fraud kept alive by priests and bishops with a view to salaries. He wanted very much to speak to his uncle and question him about science and the New Testament authorities, but, though they were on very intimate terms, he dared not approach him on this occasion. The reason was that he had taken the book from a cupboard usually locked. Martin had found

the key by accident while his uncle was up in town and could not resist the temptation to look through the hidden literature. So he put the books away and remained silent.

But when he went back to Elfrey he felt that he could no longer restrain the gushing fountain of secularism, and he determined to talk to a Berneyite called Gregson. Martin was sixteen and a member of the Upper Sixth: Gregson was a year older and in the same form. He was much less adaptable than Martin, hated all games, and had taken up the position of school heretic. In the evenings they used to settle the problem of the universe over cocoa and sardines, and there was nothing on which they had not touched. Martin had picked up some revolutionary politics from his uncle and he was delighted to find in Gregson a disciple of William Morris. At one time they had been joint leaders of Liberalism in the school debating society (they had one follower in a house of thirty), but now, to the great joy of the Tories, they turned to Socialism and lashed their former supporter. Consequently it was natural for Martin to approach Gregson on the subject of doubt, and to his great surprise he found that Gregson knew all about it. As a matter of fact there could have been few more fruitful grounds for the seed of scepticism than Gregson's soul. Gregson had an acute hair-splitting brain and an abhorrence of emotion: he came from a country parsonage, and he

had to attend church in the holidays whether he liked it or not: moreover he had a brother at the varsity who possessed a great genius for blasphemy and a quantity of rationalist pamphlets. Gregson took up comparative religion, used long words, and became very bitter.

"Why didn't you let on that you were an agnostic?" asked Martin.

"Oh, it's no use. They think you're wicked. It's best to wait till you have escaped from this prison before you open your lips."

"But you might have told me."

"I thought I'd let you find out for yourself. It was bound to happen."

Martin was surprised at Gregson's certainty.

"Bound?" he asked. "Very few people doubt."

"All rational people doubt," said Gregson with decision. "Tell me this. How can God be all-good and all-powerful and leave misery in the world?"

Martin had a vague idea that there was an answer to this. "Training, I suppose," he answered weakly.

"Yes, that's what the bishops say. Good for people to be poor, strengthens the fibre and all that. And back they slope to their palaces. But what I want to know is, why this beastly training? If God was all-powerful, the thing could be done without it and we would all be angels at once. After all, why should people die of cancer or inherit filthy diseases?"

Martin didn't see why they should.

"And then there's the Atonement," Gregson continued. "There's a childish story for you. First, it seems, God made men : then He was angry because He hadn't made them good enough. Then, just to complete the muddle, He found it necessary to kill His Son to pay for the sins of the people whom He might have made perfect if He had wanted to. That's not good enough, thank you."

It was just the type of sharp, bitter-phrased reasoning to complete the extinction of Martin's spark of faith. At first Gregson's violent attitude naturally drove Martin to a modified defence of religion, but Gregson carried far too many guns when it came to a battle of argument. He could make great play with his comparative religion, and Martin used to leave Gregson's study with a wealth of new phrases ringing in his ears : at last he could think of nothing but solar myths and gods of dying vegetation. It seemed to him very strange that the world should continue to pay any attention to the monstrous imposture which the combined efforts of Blatchford and Gregson had shown Christianity to be. But his discoveries did not make him unhappy : he had his secular socialism and, as religion had never formed a vital element in his life, its loss could involve no pain.

## VIII

MARTIN derived from his study a rich and constant enjoyment. True that it was a diminutive box of a place : true that in winter he had to choose between freezing with an open window or enduring the atmosphere that only hot-water pipes can create. There would be rows too outside, in the passage, scuffling and ragging and the singing of all the latest successes. But after the dusty turmoil of the workroom it was a possession and, though Martin was not at that time the kind of person to care intensely about his surroundings or little pieces of property, he took a definite pride in his books and pictures. He was old enough now to be above actresses : other and greater persons might bedeck their walls with fair women, but Gregson and he had decided that such things were only good for the army class. The Upper Sixth, Classical, should have traditions and its traditions should include the things of art. Gregson, on the advice of a Cubist cousin, brought back to Elfrey some modern studies of the nude, but Mr Berney discovered them and after a close examination came to the conclusion that the objects depicted were women. Then he thought the matter over and nervously demanded their removal. This

naturally fanned the flame of Gregson's bitterness against the world of school and led him to hold forth copiously to Martin, who enjoyed his rich outbursts of invective.

"Poor old Berney," he would say. "I suppose we can't blame him. He doesn't understand. Ma B. hasn't got further than Matthew Arnold and I don't suppose either of them ever heard of a chap called Wilde. [Wilde was tremendously the god of Gregson's rebellious soul.] They'll live and learn. I suppose some day schools will be reasonable places."

Gregson was not really a prig or a bore, but at times he ran the risk of combining the parts. The Public School system does just as much harm by isolating the thinker and driving him into an immature and self-conscious spirit of opposition as it would if it crushed him altogether. Gregson did not get on with the prefects. He used to allude to the Iron Heel of their system, despised their methods of keeping order, and exposed to Martin the futility of entrusting matters of conduct to swollen-headed athletes who could only just struggle into the History Sixth.

"They don't know what they're doing and don't care what they do. If they see or hear anything they haven't seen or heard before they trample on it. They all crib in form themselves and go for kids when they crib."

"That's very British," said Martin, who could still mistake a platitude for an epigram.

"British or foreign, it's all alike. Just as capital sits on labour everywhere, so muscle is still on top all over the world. It's worse at school than anywhere, but it's the Iron Heel all the same."

Martin agreed to these sentiments at the moment but gave little thought to their bearing. He was less rebellious than Gregson and was on reasonably good terms with all the present prefects except Heseltine. Also his pictures had not been banned.

Martin combined with the society of Gregson a strong friendship for a pleasant but unintellectual person called Rayner. Rayner was robust and practical and efficient: he took everything for granted, his education, his prospects, and his religion. He never questioned anything, not because he was too lazy, but because it never struck him as a normal thing to do. Naturally Martin had to discriminate carefully between the topics of conversation with his various friends. With Rayner he talked of cricket and football, the chances of this man and the failure of that, the reasons for England's success at Twickenham and Scotland's failure at Inverleith, the prospects of the varsities in their different contests. Above all, Rayner was sound about food. Gregson was too superior to 'brew' extensively, so on half-holiday afternoons in winter Rayner and Martin used to collaborate in the production

and consumption of food. They were both well off for pocket-money, and between them they would often devour a dozen or more sausages, a tin of sardines and a large bunch of bananas, not to mention the accompaniments of the feast, cocoa and bread and jam. Martin was a strong eater, but it was Rayner who really achieved the bulk of the work : together they defeated all rivals and established a house record. After feeding-time they would lie torpid in a heavenly frowst reading *Wisden's Annual* or sixpenny magazines. Gregson secretly despised Martin for enjoying these plebeian orgies, but he could not afford to quarrel since that would have meant the loss of his only audience.

It was into the life of this Martin, the intermediate Martin, who was neither the servant of Spots nor the commander of servants, that Anstey rushed in. Anstey was a small clever boy who had climbed to the Lower Sixth at great speed : he had not only considerable ability, but also possessed a genius for covering the gaps in his knowledge or reading and he would talk with Martin about authors he had never read. His manners and appearance were charming and he played half-back for Berney's second team with skill and pluck. Without being made conceited by the influential friendships which he found awaiting him wherever he turned, he had a quiet manner of self-assertion which fascinated Martin. And so when Rayner or Gregson came to Martin for a talk they would find Anstey chatting



away with his feet on the table. Then Rayner would go away hurriedly, for he thought Anstey a frivolous and unreliable creature, and if ever there was a reliable man at Elfrey it was Rayner. Gregson's objections to Anstey were based on the latter's sentimental attachment to the Catholic faith. On first acquiring a study Anstey had bought 'Peggy' and the usual pictures: three weeks later he was converted, exchanged 'Peggy' for a Madonna, and dotted the room with candles.

To Martin, Anstey would talk on any subject, from religious experience, which he had not undergone, to the beauty of his elder sisters which was equally fictitious. At times they read together, prose and poetry, Classics and English, and after reading they would launch out into vast discussions. In the Christmas holidays Martin went to stay with the Ansteys in Kensington: he was disappointed in the sisters, who indeed took very little notice of him, but Cyril Anstey was more than usually charming. They wandered about London together, went often to the play, and spent far more money than the Anstey family could afford: but of course Martin did not know that. It was not, however, until the summer term that Martin's friendship for Cyril Anstey reached its height; now at last he discovered how limited and pent up all his school life had been. He had had no enthusiasms. Religion had no appeal for him, the ancient literatures

had been so fouled by pedantic notes and introductions that they had not moved him as they should have done, for games he had only a lukewarm affection. He liked discussing teams and the chances of teams, but he had never had personal successes in athletics ; while he knew that the correct hitting of a ball might be one of life's most splendid things, his experience of that pleasure was too fragmentary to satisfy his appetite. His talks with Gregson had been enjoyable, for they had given him an opportunity to let himself go : but life, on the whole, this life at school which was universally supposed to teem with opportunities, had become monotonous and barren. One could live without feeling.

But Anstey made a difference. On Sunday afternoons or whenever through the week they could escape from cricket, they wandered together on the downs and lay on the short grass watching the white clouds sailing majestically like galleons in the blue dome above them and listening to the larks and the charge of the wind. Below them were the school towers and the green patch of playing-fields and the glittering pool of water where in summer one bathed : behind them ran the smooth sweep of the downs, clear-cut against the sunset and firm and strong as when the Roman came and built his camp upon the brow and threw his road across the hill, despising these grassy slopes as befitted one who knew the Apennines. Here were line

and colour and wind and a freshening spirit that was alien to the stuffy town below : here was something to enjoy in peace, something which made the Georgics real and the world something more than a place to live in.

And Anstey had brought him to the downs. The average Elfreyan thought climbing that slippery turf a horrid sweat, connected it with the compulsory runs of winter, and preferred to lounge in his arid house yard. Until now Martin had avoided the downs, because it wasn't the thing to go there : but when he had found the dip to Friar's Hanger and the great wood of larches beyond, he cursed the game of cricket and longed to escape from the tyranny of games. He had taken beauty for granted just as he had taken goodness and truth for granted : somehow they existed and that was all. Now he found the idea suffusing visible things and he knew how much he had missed by lounging in Berney's yard. A new door was opened. It had been opened by Anstey and the light from within was reflected on the opener, transfiguring for Martin the swift grace of his movements and giving to the rapid stream of his thoughts a depth which they really lacked. A dam had burst and Martin had no longer to seek an outlet for his emotions. Gladly he entered on strange paths of sentiment, and he no longer deceived himself with the lie that his friendship with Anstey was comparable to his friendship for Gregson

or Rayner. One afternoon they found a new path and a new hollow where the young bracken made a couch softer than the bare hill-side. Here there was no clack of cricket balls, no nets, no shouting of 'Heads' and terrified ducking. Only the wind whispered in the bracken and an old sheep grunted in the sun, for the weather was warm and he should long ago have been sheared.

The two boys lay in silence, pretending to read.

"It's ripping of you to be bothered with me," said Martin suddenly.

"What do you mean?" said Anstey.

"I mean that you aren't my sort. You see things much more quickly than I do. You don't plod like me."

"I haven't your brains—that's the truth."

"No, it isn't. Of course it isn't." Yet Martin was half-conscious that he lied. His affection for Anstey had forced him to tell a needless falsehood in a futile effort to quiet the voice which cried within him: "He isn't good enough for you." Then he added: "You've shown me all this."

"I may see things you miss," said Anstey, "but I've no practical ability, no thoroughness. Anyhow I'm glad if I've given you something in return for what you have given me."

Martin had bought books for Anstey, Synge at five shillings a volume. He had been proud of knowing about Synge at school.

"Oh, that was nothing," he answered. But it had meant fewer sardines and sausages when he fed with Rayner.

"Then we're quits, dear old fool."

"Why old fool?"

"For taking me seriously."

"Why shouldn't I?"

"Nobody else does. I amuse them and they like me all right. But I think you really care——"

"Yes, of course. Honestly, I care."

They lay in silence, looking at one another.

Later on they went headlong down the slopes and assuaged their heat by bathing in the pool, which was almost deserted. It was still warm enough to lie on the soft banks so that the setting sun might dry their bodies.

They were late for house tea.

At this point Heseltine comes into the story.

He was head of Berney's, a fact of which he was most painfully aware. Though not prominent in games, he was sound in all branches of life: above all, he was a man with an influence, a force for good, one of Foskett's darlings. He held strong views on the duty of a prefect and the possibility of 'feeling the school's moral pulse.' Berney's objected to his constant attentions: the house preferred to have its pulse unfelt. Everyone resented Heseltine's new rules and posted notices and petty interference, but of all Berneyites the most

opposed to Heseltine in spirit and conduct was Anstey.

That night Heseltine asked Martin to see him after prep.

"Oh, I want to have a chat with you," said Heseltine when Martin arrived. "Just one friend to another."

"Yes," said Martin suspiciously.

"You've been going about a lot with young Anstey," the prefect went on.

"Yes."

"I don't want to seem interfering" (sure sign, Martin knew, that he was going to interfere), "but I think I ought to warn you against him. He's not good enough for you. His record isn't a good one."

"He's in the Lower Sixth."

"I know that. He's clever enough. But we've had trouble with him. He doesn't fit into things: he's dangerous."

Martin wanted to say: "You think everybody dangerous who has more brains than you." As a matter of fact he said: "Oh?" There was something formidable about Heseltine.

"Of course," he continued, "one can't be too careful in matters of this sort. In a community like this sentimental attachments won't do. We prefects are responsible for the moral health of the school and we've got to keep our fingers on its pulse. . . ." He prosed away and Martin regarded the literature he

favoured. He read, it seemed, Seton Merriman and the publications of the Agenda Club. Suddenly he realised that Heseltine was saying: "I want you to promise me to see less of him."

Martin flared up at once. "I don't see why," he said angrily.

"I've given my reasons. He's not a fit friend for you."

"Surely that's for me to judge."

"You're not infallible. I'm only speaking for your good. I should like to have your promise. I know I can't compel you, but I ask it as a favour."

"I think my friends are my own affair," answered Martin, infuriated by what he considered to be the oiliness, the furtive oiliness, of Heseltine's methods.

During the next three days Martin was constantly with Anstey and, as a result, Heseltine declared war. He definitely forbade the friends to visit each other's studies without permission, and on the following evening he swiped Anstey for impertinence. To swipe a member of the Sixth was a violation of tradition but not of law. Not even Anstey could have denied that he had been sublimely impertinent, but his appeal was to custom. Heseltine smiled calmly and said that he couldn't be limited by hide-bound traditions when the maintenance of discipline was at stake. He enjoyed his triumph and did not spare his victim.

The news came to Martin through Rayner, who,

though secretly pleased at Anstey's discomfiture, honestly admitted that Heseltine hadn't played the game. Martin listened to him in silence : he did not volunteer any conversation and was glad that Rayner went away at once.

He picked up a book and went straight to Heseltine's study.

"Can I speak to Anstey?" he asked quietly. "It's about some words in Homer!"

Heseltine looked at him suspiciously : he could hardly call him a liar to his face. "Very well," he said. "But don't stay."

Martin found Anstey in his arm-chair. His face was very white and when he saw Martin he smiled the forced, flickering smile that is so often born of an effort to conceal pain.

"It's all right," said Martin, "I've got permission." Anstey told him to sit down.

"It's frightfully rotten luck," Martin began. "Heseltine is simply a devil."

"He didn't hurt me as much as he thought he had."

The thought gave Martin a thrill : it was something more than sympathy.

"What did he have you up for?" he asked.

"Cheek. You must have heard what I said. I certainly shouted."

"But I joined in that."



It had been in the tuck-shop. Heseltine's entrance had been greeted with remarks about the advent of the deity.

"He didn't hear you."

Martin knew that he hadn't shouted: he had only muttered something. He hadn't Anstey's pluck. The thought was bitter and increased his admiration of Heseltine's victim. Anstey had suffered for what he had helped to do.

"But what about this persecution?" he exclaimed suddenly. "I'm damned if I stand it."

"And what do you propose to do?"

"I don't see why we shouldn't remain friends."

"Nor do I. But the powers disagree."

"Damn the powers."

"Certainly."

"Well, I'm going to see you as often as I like if you'll have me. If Heseltine says anything I'll tell him to go to Berney or Foskett if he likes."

Anstey made no reply.

"Do you mean," said Martin, "that you won't go on, that you don't want me?"

"Of course I want you. But it's no use fighting. I've got a bad name with the beaks and it's a hundred to one they back up Heseltine. You know how they drop on this sort of thing. I think they're all wrong: in this case I know they are. But there it is. They've got the whip hand and we can't fight against the odds,"

"I'm willing to try."

"If you do, you'll be very admirable and very foolish. Look here. You may be a pre next term. Fighting means you miss that; it means nothing but trouble all day long. I've been in rows and I know. It's no use. There's more pluck in surrender."

Martin got up. "I think I'll go," he said.

"I hope you don't think I'm playing a low-down game," interrupted Anstey.

"No, it isn't that. I just want to think things over. Besides, time is up."

He went back to his study and tried to clear his mind. At first he was bitterly angered by Anstey's surrender, but later on he realised that, after all, Anstey had already been under fire in the war's first skirmish, whereas he, Martin, had gone unscathed. He was in no position to make criticisms, much less taunts. Then his thoughts turned from Anstey to Heseltine. He knew now what Gregson meant when he talked of the Iron Heel: he could feel its pressure now. More clearly than ever before he learned that membership of society is a doubtful blessing and that is means cruelty and waste and sacrifice and compels us to jettison the rare to save the common. For the sake of example, to preserve discipline, to keep the house working he had now to give up the most precious thing in his life. In the last few weeks something new had burst into his soul like a drunken reveller, upsetting

things and setting things up, something at once beautiful and terrible : but its beauty had surpassed its terror. Beauty had been blown into his sight and imaginings on the wind-swept downs and now it was to be swept away again by the grim forces of convention and utility. Just because others spoiled things he must be deprived of them : the high must be of less account than the low, the beautiful must yield to the ugly. This was morality and the social good, this was the Law of whose glories complacent philosophers loved to preach. He ought to fight it ; he must fight it. But how ? The question was as unanswerable as it was insistent. At length he gave it up. All that he could do was to pour out his soul to Gregson, for here, if anywhere, Gregson might be of use. Together they denounced the Iron Heel, and it was well for Martin that this outlet was not denied him. He was saved from despair, perhaps from disaster, by a fortnight's ferocious Anarchism.

And in a fortnight the wound had healed. Enforced abstention from Anstey's society did its work. Anstey easily picked up new friends and Martin was astonished to find that he was not jealous of them. He was equally astonished at his own speedy reconciliation with the order of things and his swift relapse from Anarchism to Socialism. Anstey had been right : there was, after all, much to be said for social peace and convenience.

In another week he was beginning to ask himself what he had ever seen to admire in Anstey. Climbing the downs *was* a horrid sweat and cricket with Rayner had undoubted fascinations.

## IX

IN the Michaelmas term Martin became a house prefect. He was glad to obtain the position, not only because authority has always some attraction, but also because it brought with it some definite and desirable privileges. No longer need he observe hated bounds, no longer was he obliged to turn up at games if he felt disinclined. Martin now became a person to be consulted, an organiser with a voice in the affairs of a community. Though he was not, like many of Mr Foskett's disciples, fired with a passion for 'running things' indiscriminately and irresponsibly, he quite realised that bossing has its pleasures and possibilities. It was typical of the new situation that he was able to give up playing forward for the house and to obtain a trial as wing three-quarter. He had pace and managed to score in the first game: soon he improved wonderfully and settled down in his position. It struck him that there was a great deal to be said for playing football, even regular, incessant football, when you could choose your own position in the field and play without fear of being sworn at.

Naturally his duties brought him into closer contact with his housemaster and he became intimate with

the methodical ways of Mr Berney and the efficient management and culture of his wife. In the evenings he received frequent invitations to the drawing-room, where he would talk about Florence and Botticelli, Oxford and Matthew Arnold. In his younger days he had worshipped Mrs Berney with a flaming devotion. Now he was more critical, but, while he understood the limitations of her culture and suspected her of attending University Extension Lectures in order to be told about the poets, he did not cease to like her. At anyrate she did not bubble over with unconvincing enthusiasm, like Mrs Foskett, and she did care in a rather ignorant, muddle-headed, but thoroughly genuine way for the things of art. Martin had of course outdistanced many of her tastes and they would have great arguments about Tennyson and Browning and Swinburne. Mrs Berney, who was deeply religious, could never forgive Swinburne. It seemed strange to Martin that so persistent and so sincere an affection for poetry should be so limited. What did it matter, he asked himself, whether Swinburne liked God or whether he didn't? The point was to him that Swinburne had a great, angry soul and could let himself go. But Mrs Berney insisted that that had nothing to do with it: poetry was the making of a beautiful thing and Swinburne had tried to make ugly things beautiful. Of course Martin urged that poetry consisted in pouring a true thing out of yourself, and then he shocked her

by saying he hated the word "beautiful." And so they would be carried away with long arguments on æsthetics, sometimes childish and always futile, for neither realised when they had reached an ultimate or what exactly they were trying to prove. Yet both enjoyed the conversation: Martin was intellectually isolated since Gregson had gone to Oxford, and Mrs Berney always welcomed the appearance of intellectual tastes in the house. Besides, she had sense enough to understand that Martin had made some good suggestions and was armed with a consistent principle of criticism.

The actual work of office was not so pleasing. Heseltine had gone on to Cambridge, where it was hoped that he would be taken in hand, and Rayner was head of the house. Rayner was bigger, stronger, and more reliable than ever and he could keep order successfully without a constant use of penalties: Martin admired him, in spite of his intellectual limitations, and aspired to a similar method of government which should be at once peaceful and efficient. It had occurred that, without becoming 'the boy among boys' or 'the workroom pet' or anything horrible of that sort, it might be possible to avoid irresponsible tyranny. Mainly owing to the influence of his social and political views he had bullied himself into the belief that the workroom would be much better if left alone. What the younger members of the house needed was to be trusted, not beaten. They only fell

from virtue's path because so many people were engaged in the task of keeping them straight with whips and scorpions. He had been sickened by the stupid despotism of athletes which had often culminated in acts of cruelty and injustice and he wanted to bring to his work a finer attitude and endeavour. And so it was with the crude, untested idealism of a seventeen-year-old humanist that he approached the formidable task of subduing a fifteen-year-old mob.

The beginning was not auspicious. The trouble began, as trouble always began, with Master J. R. F. Gransby-Williams, a rotund youth with a genius for keeping within the letter of the law. His chief aim in life was to rag, and he worked hard to attain it; but there was a subsidiary ambition to be a nut. Consequently he was very scrupulous about his ties and socks and handkerchiefs; his hair he kept very long and parted with miraculous precision.

During Martin's first prep Granny (for so he was called) showed signs of a cold. He blew his nose perpetually and with skill: the noise was as the blare of trumpets.

"Would you mind moderating your efforts?" suggested Martin from his chair.

"Certainly not," said Granny with supreme urbanity.

It was cheek, and a titter ran round the workroom. Martin had been gifted by nature with an unfortunate capacity for blushing, and he blushed now.



"Don't give me any of that lip or you'll get into trouble," he said without conviction.

"That was not my intention," answered Granny, urbane as ever. "I'm very sorry."

Again there was a titter. Martin blushed and swore inwardly : he knew that he was not beginning well.

A few minutes later one Dickinson said : "Please can we have the window open : there's an awful frowst."

"I suppose so," answered Martin. "It does seem a bit thick in here."

Here was Granny's chance. He sneezed magnificently. "May I go and fetch my overcoat ?" he asked mildly.

"Shut up," said Martin.

Granny turned up his collar, blew his nose with gentle persistence, and started to shiver. Others followed his example, and the room began to resound with the chattering of teeth.

Martin felt desperate. What exactly was the right way to deal with this kind of ragging ? What would Rayner do ? That was where the difficulty lay : the workroom never tried this game with Rayner, so that it was impossible to say what Rayner would have done. Swearing at them wouldn't do : he couldn't swipe the whole company. Besides, there were his ideals. Foolishly he determined to try and work in his idealism under the pretext of a joke : it was a cowardly compromise and it deserved to fail.

"I suppose," he said, "we might take a vote about the window."

There was a genial roar of acclamation.

"Those in favour of keeping it open," he went on, "shove up your hands."

There was much talking and throwing of paper balls. Hoarse whispers such as, 'Jones, you stinker, put your hand down or I'll kill you afterwards,' came to his ears. The counting was complicated by the necessity of disqualifying all those who held up both hands with a view to fraud. When the oppositions were being numbered there were murmurs of: 'Lowsy swine,' 'Frowsters,' and so on. The affair was soundly managed by the mob and a tie resulted, so that Martin had to give a casting vote. Imploring faces were turned towards him: the opening of the window was plainly a matter of life and death to that valetudinarian assembly.

"Keep it open," said Martin, determined to abide by his first order.

There were subdued cheers and moans, nasal snufflings and raucous coughs. Above it all the voice of Granny was heard.

"May I borrow some quinine?" he demanded.

Martin now saw the folly of his actions. The matter had gone too far, he had lost grip, and a tremendous rag was imminent.

"Shut up," he roared with all the authority he could command.

And just then Rayner came in to take his spell of prep. There was an immediate silence. Martin left the room in an agony of despair. What the deuce would Rayner think ?

As he sat in his study pretending to read Tacitus the prospect of failure and misery became cruelly imminent. He couldn't make out why the workroom people would shut up for Rayner. Rayner wasn't noted for his severity and didn't make half as much use of the Iron Heel as some of his predecessors in Berney's or contemporaries in other houses. Martin was faced with the eternal paradox of government, that those who can govern do not need to punish, while those who punish do not thereby govern. He had always suspected the common talk about personalities and strong men : but now he began to wonder whether there wasn't something in it after all. Anyhow it seemed that by one action of hesitation he had lost his chance : his prestige was going, and if he once gained a reputation for 'raggability' there would be no more peace. The memory of Barmy Walters and the sordid tumult of his classroom came to him with a new piquancy.

"My God !" he said, "it sha'n't be that." He would have to go for Granny. But how did one go for such a creature ? Granny always kept to the letter of the law and protested that he had meant nothing : was one simply to disregard his assertions, to call him a

liar ? How did Rayner manage ? And there were the ideals. Would this method be consonant with the humanism of the new prefecture ? It was all immensely difficult.

Later in the evening Rayner came to his study : he was very nice about it.

“ I say, old man,” he said kindly, “ that wasn’t a good beginning.”

“ It certainly wasn’t,” admitted Martin.

“ Granny, I suppose ? ” asked the other.

“ Yes, mainly.”

“ Well there’s only one thing for Master Gransby-Williams. Damp the little beast.”

“ It’s not so easy. He’s always on the safe side of the fence. If he swears that he didn’t mean what you think he meant, you can’t very well do anything.”

Rayner smiled.

“ Can’t you ? ” he said.

“ Well, can you ? ”

“ You jolly well must. Otherwise there’ll be no end to it.”

“ All right, I’ll try. But it seems rather rotten.”

“ Doesn’t it strike you as rotten to be ragged by a tick like Granny ? ”

Martin had to admit that it was.

Three nights later Martin interviewed Granny after prayers. There had been a rag in the prep. A mouse had escaped from Granny’s desk and had been

the target of many marksmen. The air had been positively black with hurtling dictionaries. The mouse of course escaped and the missiles struck human flesh, compelling recrimination and redress.

"The mouse came out of your desk," said Martin.

"Please, I didn't put it there," whined Granny.

"I don't care. You must have known it was there when you got your books out."

"It may have been asleep," suggested Granny with sudden brilliance.

"Rot!"

"Well, I read in a book that mice sleep fourteen hours out of twenty-four. Anyhow I didn't notice it. It's got to put in its fourteen hours some time."

"The fact remains," said Martin, "that you're responsible for the contents of your desk."

"If another chap puts a mouse in your desk, I don't see——"

Martin was tired of the squalid haggling. But what was he to do? On his own theories, he ought to give Granny the benefit of the doubt and let him go. That was plainly the idealist's course. But there was Rayner's advice: should he yield to the claim of expediency and try it? Suddenly the impudent whine of Granny's voice became intolerable and he determined to be stern.

But the subsequent swiping was, as Granny told the workroom, sketchy and amateurish.

Presently Dickinson knocked at Martin's study.

"Please," he said, "I put that mouse in Gransby-Williams' desk."

Martin, who was just beginning to repent of his fall from idealism, turned upon him in despair. "Why the deuce didn't you own up at once?" he demanded.

"You never asked who did it."

"I did."

"Well, I couldn't hear. There was such a row going on."

That was a stinging retort for Martin: he was certainly getting the worst of it. And Granny was in a strong position, a painfully strong position. Fortunately, however, Martin acted wisely: he was faithful to the new policy, forswore his ideals, and swiped Dickinson. Moreover, his second effort was more thorough, and Dickinson sorrowfully maintained that this talk about sketchy and amateurish methods was a delusion: the blighter, he said, was an artist.

On the next day Granny, the martyr, organised a meeting of protest. Rayner, hearing of it, asked Martin for an explanation.

"That's capital," he said when he had heard the story. "You've been thoroughly unjust, and now you can go on damping Granny with a free conscience. In for a penny, in for a pound."

"I'm sick of the whole business," said Martin.

"Don't be an ass," answered Rayner, and that

evening he spoke firmly to Granny. Somehow or other the combined effect of Martin's treatment of Dickinson and Rayner's conversation with Granny led to a change of policy in the workroom.

That night Martin again took prep. As he sat on his dais regarding the victims of his wrath, he was haunted for a moment by the ghost of his murdered ideals ; but only for a moment.

And he sat in peace.

## X

DURING the winter term before he was to go up to Oxford for a scholarship examination Martin felt more than ever isolated. Rayner was a good enough companion for 'brewing' or a casual talk, but he had, distinctly, his limitations. It was only now, when Gregson had gone to Oxford and the light, that Martin realised how much he missed him and how dark and murky was the cave of school life.

There is little satisfaction to be derived from discoveries which cannot be communicated: to find a perfect poem, or, if you are young, a perfect epigram, is good, but to let your friends know you have found it is doubly delightful. And now Martin had to keep his discoveries to himself: if he devised another argument against the existence of God or detected another logical absurdity in Christian dogma there was no one to whom he could declare his joy: if he stumbled in his reading on a thing which pleased him—well, the rest of the house were swine for such a pearl.

Because Martin was treading the path of knowledge alone he was driven by sheer force of necessity into intellectual priggishness and crudity. When he was not engaged in prefectorial work, he tended to become



a recluse and to read in his study for long periods at a stretch : and because he had no opposition and no conversation, save the rather mild stimulus of discussing æsthetics with Mrs Berney, he became, as time went on, more violent in his opinions. He often longed for the bitter tongue and incisive reasoning of Gregson, not least when he had completed a course of Shaw's dramas. There was no escape from attendance at chapel and prayers and the wrath always engendered in the sceptic by compulsory religion should have an outlet. Martin, having no one to talk to, was forced to amuse himself with blasphemous imaginings : but even that began to pall.

It was at this point that he became aware of Finney. Until he had become a prefect and learned by experience that the ruler's task is not always the easiest and most enjoyable, he had always adopted the natural attitude to masters. A 'crusher' was just a person whom, if possible, one ragged. If he could hold his own, well and good : if not, he merited contempt, not mercy, and the more he was ragged the better it would be for the world at large. But when Martin discovered from his own experience that to be ragged is torture, he began to regard the doings and sufferings of the masters in a different light. It suddenly struck him, with all the vivid effect of a surprise, that these people were human beings of like passions with himself.

Following quickly on that discovery came the

recognition of the fact that Finney was being ragged. Reginald Finney, B.A., had not left Oxford for more than two years, but he had bravely married, and now he lived in a tiny cottage some distance from the school. Every day he bicycled in to take the Upper Fourth, Classical, and to devote occasional hours to the Upper Sixth. In time, of course, he would become a Sixth form master, for he had excellent degrees—two firsts and a ‘mention’ in the Ireland scholarship. He had lingered at Oxford with a view to a fellowship, but nothing turned up : at last he had been compelled by economic pressure to take the position offered him at Elfrey.

Nothing could have been more disastrous. For twenty years the Upper Fourth had passed a somnolent existence under the direction of an amiable and unassuming cleric. Much to the general disgust the dear old man had, after a severe attack of pneumonia, resigned. In twenty years, as was only natural, the Upper Fourth had become an institution : terms and times continued to change, but the Upper Fourth did nothing of the kind. Fourth-formers came and went in scores, but their successors always managed to keep up the traditions of their inheritance with spirit and success. There would be four or five clever and energetic children, people rising rapidly to the Fifth, Sixth, and university scholarships ; then there would be eight or ten inky and unambitious persons who would never

get beyond the Fifth. And lastly there would be four or five monsters of seventeen or eighteen who were engaged in getting the greatest possible enjoyment out of their last year at school. Good athletes as a rule, they were popular in their house and merely stayed on till the fatal day of superannuation in order to win cups and caps and enjoy a serene life before disappearing into the dingy office of an uncle or the rough and tumble of a planter's existence. In the days of the amiable cleric the Upper Fourth had been to them Nirvana.

To such a form came Finney, clever, inexperienced, nervous: not even his physique was imposing. He liked and encouraged the clever little boys and made fruitless efforts to bully the ink-stained loafers; he also determined to assault the fortress of the Olympians and to make the great ones work; but he broke his soul upon a rock. When he adjured them to do a little work they smiled in toleration. When he suggested a change in the quantity or quality of their preparation he was politely informed that Mr Foss never expected so much. He then lost his temper, remarked savagely that he wouldn't be bound by the idiosyncrasies of Mr Foss, and dealt out impositions. A schoolmaster cannot afford to lose his temper unless he has complete self-confidence and the will never to retract. Finney had not been gifted with a forceful personality, and the weak man in a temper is a most pitiable sight. The

impositions meant the declaration of war and in that war Finney was beaten all along the line.

To begin with, however, he relied on his hours with the Upper Sixth for spiritual comfort, but his own experiences at school should have warned him that even Upper Sixths are human. It was his duty to read classical authors with them at a great pace and without attention to detail in order to give the competitors for university scholarships a wider knowledge of the ancient literature. When he came to read Tacitus with them he soon discovered that they were quite capable of amusing themselves. Having learned that journalese translations annoyed him, they racked their brains and searched the halfpenny press for new phrases. Finney shuddered and protested: next he whined and finally lost his temper. This display was gratifying to the Upper Sixth, who had just spent two tedious hours listening to Foskett on Greek dialects. Besides, there is always satisfaction in luring fish to one's bait.

Martin loathed and dreaded these hours. Not only did his recent experiences as a prefect compel him to sympathise with the impotent wielder of authority, but he had been attracted by Finney from the first. Finney worked in earnest and without pose or pretension, a fact which set him, in Martin's estimation, on a plane far above Foskett. He worked for Finney as he never worked for Foskett, and consulted him about

his reading : naturally Finney liked Martin and did all he could to help him. On several Sundays Martin went to lunch at the cottage and met Mrs Finney, a pleasant little woman whose beauty was somewhat marred by an expression of perpetual surprise. She was, like her husband, a slight and unimposing figure, and she shrank from the society of the college ladies with their continual "shop" conversation, partly from shyness and partly from boredom. When she was not looking after her baby she used to play the violin and read *The Bookman* and *The Studio*. For several hours every week she struggled with accounts and wondered how things would work out : she managed well, and somehow, miraculously, but persistently, they did work out.

She also liked Martin and he would come often to them. In a world that was hard and unsympathetic he was graciously different ; he was essentially someone in whom interest could and should be taken, and this was what the Finneys needed. They saw and, after a time, understood his limitations, realising how his intellectual solitude was narrowing his outlook and how his heretical views about politics and life in general were left crude and immature because he dared not pronounce them openly and demand criticism. Criticism he lacked, and it was criticism they gave him, not the best perhaps, for the Finneys erred occasionally on the side of excessive culture and preciosity, but such

criticism as would turn violence into strength and reveal possibilities of reason and feeling where he had seen before nothing but ignorance and sentimentality.

As Martin was destined for Oxford Finney thought it wise to introduce him to the writing of Belloc. "You'll get heaps out of him," he said. "Of course he goes to extremes, but his criticism of Socialism is the only sane one and worth a million of Mallock and Cox and that gang. And his arguments about religion aren't all nonsense. I don't agree with him" (Finney attended school chapel regularly and was a party Liberal), "but it's a point of view. And he can write."

Martin had never considered this outlook on the world before, and, though at times he was angry, he began to read Belloc eagerly, especially the verses. He had often heard his uncle talking about Belloc, but so far he had never troubled to investigate the matter further: now he was glad.

After lunch on Sunday afternoons he would walk with Finney on the downs, and sometimes they would talk about the Public Schools. At first Finney was reticent on their subject, but later he spoke with growing freedom and intimacy.

"It's odd how we get chucked into it," Finney used to say. "Everyone says teaching is the most important thing in the world, and they chatter away about training and so on: and yet when it comes to the point they allow their precious boys to be taught by

men who are quite untrained for this profession. No master at a Public School has had any technical training or been taught how to see and shape things. He just clears out of the varsity with some debts and a little despair and then starts casually to do what is perhaps the most difficult and important thing in the world. And they don't get the pick of the varsities either: the standard keeps going down. The best men won't do it if they can keep out."

Finney could not, in the presence of a pupil, finish his indictment as he wished. Had it been possible he would have added: "The salaries are contemptible and are kept low by the bribe of a house: which in reality means that we have to pinch and scrape now because, if we are lucky, we may be able to make a thousand a year at forty if we don't overfeed our boys."

"And yet," suggested Martin, "don't you think it's rather refreshing to find something left to common-sense. Everything gets into the hands of faddists now. I once met an old lady who spent her life in teaching children how to play. Imagine the cheek of it! You put me on to Belloc and I think he's right about that sort of thing. 'We don't want too much of the bureaucratic specialist.'"

"I quite agree," said Finney. "That's the tragedy. Just where spontaneity really does matter, as in children's games, they go blundering in and knock

imagination out of their victims, or give them someone else's, which is about the same thing. But just where training might be of some use, they do nothing. The superstition that a man can teach because he has taken a first in Classics at the varsity is childish. I don't claim to know very much now, but when I started my work I was hideously ignorant about the working of boys' minds: I never knew when I was being obvious or when I got beyond them. Of course one picks things up by experience, but it might be done so much better. . . ."

"And then the narrowness," he rambled on, for he found a good audience in Martin. "You'll get a first in Mods, if you take the trouble, and by the time you're twenty or twenty-one you'll know all about Athenian law-courts and what the Greek is for a demurrer or a counter-claim, and you'll know all the hard words in Homer and be able to translate Cicero's jokes. You'll cram up a lot of variant readings for your special play and collect a nice set of texts with all the difficult passages marked. And when it's all over you'll thank God and imagine that you've done with it, only to find out that Greats is rather worse and means spotting the words for Egyptian bogwort in Herodotus and getting up the most meaningless bits of gibberish in Thucydides. It's the same all along. A schoolmaster wants to make some money, a don wants to make a name, so out comes a new reading, a new conjecture,



a new edition and a thousand other straws of pedantry to be piled on the back of a poor old camel that collapsed years ago."

"It sounds pretty rotten," said Martin. "But I suppose at Oxford one can read and talk freely and follow up the things one likes?"

"Yes, you must do that. Don't get worried about Mods. Are you thinking of the Civil Service?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"Well Mods won't matter much. So take up anything you really care for. That's the only thing in life worth doing, and it may be about the only time in your life when you're able to do it."

Of course Finney never spoke to Martin about school discipline, but it was not hard for Martin to see that he was very much depressed. His sufferings with the Fourth he might have expected: but that the Upper Sixth should rag childishly was a cruel blow. He was so keenly anxious to take an interest in his work and to make those hours of rapid translation valuable: but everything seemed to go against him.

He went through some Tacitus and Juvenal and Pindar at a great pace amid considerable amusement. For Tacitus gave facilities for journalese, Juvenal for obscenity, and Pindar for colossal bathos. In despair Finney turned to the sixth book of the *Æneid*, "Just to help your hexameters." They surely wouldn't rag that.

Yet trouble did break out. One Cartwright, a large, genial, athletic person who expected to get an exhibition at Cambridge for his games, was always to the fore when there seemed any opportunity of baiting Finney. To him fell the Dædalus passage at the beginning of the book: his rendering was picturesque and contained such gems as 'Intrepid aeronaut' and 'Bird-man.'

"That's not English and it isn't in the Latin," said Finney sharply.

"I don't know, sir," said Cartwright weightily. "'Præpetibus pennis ausus'—note of daring. Intrepid. Intrepid aeronaut. Why not, sir? And then 'levis super astitit'—note of hovering over. Bird-man. Why not, sir?"

Finney paused in silence. The Upper Sixth were tittering like infants of twelve, with the exception of Martin, who stared self-consciously at his desk, hating every moment and dreading what was to come. Fortunately Finney controlled his temper and said quickly:

"Don't be childish, Cartwright. Translate, Warren."

Warren was an intelligent youth and gifted with endless audacity. A week or two later they turned back to the first book (Finney couldn't tolerate their assault on the second half of Book VI.), and Warren had in his section the line:

"Succinctam pharetra et maculoso tegmine lyncis."

This he rendered : " With a check golf-skirt and a bag of clubs."

There was a wild roar of laughter and Finney went very red. Again he controlled himself and merely said : " Quite good. But you might keep your jokes till the end of the hour."

At last an event occurred which he could not overlook. Cartwright was translating Tacitus and he had a book open under his desk. The words flowed smoothly, with unwonted smoothness, for Cartwright was slow of wit. At the end of the chapter Finney remarked : " Are you aware, Cartwright, that you have reproduced the excellent translation by Messrs Church and Brobribb word for word ? "

" Have I, sir ? " answered Cartwright with astonishment.

" You have. And what is your explanation ? "

Cartwright reflected.

" Only that great minds think alike," he said at last.

" I shall report you to the headmaster," shouted Finney above the roar of laughter.

Hitherto he had shrunk from informing Foskett of the way things went. He had been afraid that any such move might be taken as a proof of his own incompetence. Foskett might reasonably hold that it was a master's business to look after himself and that a man who couldn't deal with an Upper Sixth couldn't deal with anyone. And he had heard in the common-

room that Foskett was remarkably fond of his prefects and would even back them against the masters, because he regarded them as more valuable allies in strengthening his own position with the rank and file of the school. After all, the masters were employees and far too deeply concerned with the problem of earning a living to do any harm to Foskett: they would be unwilling to resign, because, even if they found posts, it would mean loss of seniority at the new school. Distinctly he had the whip hand over them; but the prefects were harder to control and demanded more respect. So the masters had grown chary of reporting matters to the Head, and Finney had been warned that such a policy might lead to snubs. But on this occasion there was plainly nothing else to do.

Foskett spoke gravely to Cartwright for ten minutes on the subject of example, and matters went on as before. Cartwright was captain of football at the time.

So Finney continued to suffer, and because Finney suffered Martin inevitably suffered too. The ragging got on his nerves and he began to dread those long hours with their mirth and tragedy. At last he could bear it no longer, and he determined to speak to Cartwright and his allies and to point out how miserable they were making Finney: the man was a human being after all, he would say, and as an enemy he was not worth their efforts.

At first it seemed an easy thing to do, but when the

time for action came he shrank from the task. It would be so strange, so opposed to all traditions. And Martin was distinctly one of the class of people who hate asking questions or worrying tradesmen or exacting their rights : he would rather have put up with a badly cut suit than protest to his tailor. He was not afraid of Cartwright, but he was undeniably afraid of asking Cartwright to be kind to Finney : it was just the kind of task which Martin most dreaded. He could imagine Cartwright's tolerant smile, the slight raising of the brows, the polite : ' Oh, certainly ! ' It would be painful, it would be intolerable !

But it would have to be done. One final jest, one final look of despair on Finney's face convinced him. So he nerved himself bravely for the crusade. Cartwright was, as he had foreseen, quite nice about it : he agreed that it was not good form to behave as the Fourth did, and Warren and the others assented. Martin had struck the right note when he used the phrase ' good form,' for no member of a Public School, young or old, can stand the imputation that he is not a gentleman. Martin was astonished at the ease and success of his task and was angry with himself for not having acted before. Henceforward Finney taught in peace and even made Cartwright begin to display a keen interest in Pindar. It was a thorough change and altered the whole aspect of Finney's work : he could forget the unspeakable Fourth-formers if he

could really care about his work for the Sixth. His relief was obvious, and Martin, eagerly watching for every expression of it, felt justly grateful.

Finney could not guess the real cause of the new behaviour. For a moment he thought that perhaps his manner was becoming more imperious and that he had made definite progress in his efforts to acquire authority. But, on reflection, he had to abandon this flattering hypothesis, and he ultimately attributed the change to the growth of a collective conscience and the recognition that scholarship exams were dangerously near and that it might be as well to work seriously. That he could have made such a mistake showed that he still had much to learn about his pupils. But, from the pragmatic standpoint, his ignorance was for his own good : had he known that he was merely the recipient of charity, 'the something bitter' might have risen and destroyed the new-born happiness.

## XI

IN December Martin, who was now seventeen and a half years old, went up to Oxford to compete for a scholarship in Classics. Foskett had encouraged him to wait another year, but John Berrisford held that boys should be free from the pettiness of school life before they were nineteen and advised Martin to go up early: this course would give him another twelve months for Civil Service preparation if necessary. Martin himself had no desire for another year at Elfrey, for, without positively disliking the place, he wanted freedom. His prefecture had brought him more trouble than release, and the Finneys, while they had undoubtedly refined his tastes and broadened his views, had also inevitably rendered him more discontented with the limitations of a society which drove him to silence or to crudity.

Martin was not a remarkable classic and never learned to sympathise with the somewhat pedantic traditions of a classical training, nor had he the imitative faculty necessary for the composition of good prose and verse in Greek or Latin; his work was always sound and often interesting; but he never acquired the infallible dexterity of touch which is the

fruit of perfect sympathy with classical modes of thought and expression. His translation into English showed more style than accuracy, and he preferred rather to play loosely with ideas and to follow the literary and social questions arising from a study of the ancient literatures than to apply himself vigorously to pure scholarship. There never had been any doubt about his being an Oxford man. His tastes and abilities, his family connections and his project of entering the Civil Service all pointed in one direction. Moreover, he had somehow been obsessed with a notion that all Cambridge colleges, with the exception of King's and Trinity, were like public schools continued. Had not Heseltine gone to Cambridge? But Oxford would be very different; for how could Oxford, the home of Shelley and Swinburne and Morris, be anything but beautiful and brilliant? Martin was thrilled by the exquisite promise of life: Oxford would be heavenly, and heaven—well, heaven would be all atheism and epigrams. The paradox pleased him and he wondered whether it was the sort of remark he would make to his college debating society next October. But first of all, he sadly remembered, there was this affair of scholarships.

He entered for a small group and gave King's pride of place. It had been his father's college and was in many ways suitable. Its scholarships were neither too hard nor too easy to win. It was a small college in



the first rank and commanded universal respect. It prided itself on being successful, not brazenly, like Balliol, but with discretion, unassumingly.

In spite of the opinions of poets, literary gentlemen and writers of guide-books, it is possible to maintain that Oxford is not a nice place in which to live, much less to work. In December it is, on the whole, at its worst, and it was on the second Monday of that month that Martin arrived in the city. Term had ended on the previous Saturday, and only a few undergraduates were to be seen wandering about the deserted streets with a bored and lost expression. Oxford has a double personality: in term it serves efficiently as a crowded pleasure resort; in the vacation it is one of those cities, like Bruges la morte, whose justification is in the past and the memorials of the past. A compromise is fatal and undergraduates must exist in hundreds or not at all. A soft drizzle fell from a yellow, smudgy sky and the streets were covered with a particularly loathsome mud. As he drove down from the station to King's (he was to have rooms in college), Martin was horrified: he felt that he had never seen a more lamentable place. To be rattled in a hansom down George Street and then brought face to face with the front quad of Balliol is not an inspiring method of approach to beauty. But King's was more presentable.

An aged man, who looked dyspeptic and morose,

staggered out of the lodge and asked Martin's name : then he summoned a brisk underling, immaculately dressed in a bowler hat and dark blue suit. The underling picked up his bag and guided him up three flights of rickety stairs into a dingy apartment, mainly remarkable for the smallness of its windows. Outside the door Martin had seen the word ' Snutch.'

" Mr Snutch's," said the underling. " These will be yours." Then, to Martin's great surprise and at the expense of his own perfect trousers, he knelt humbly down and lit the fire. It seemed incredible that one so magnificent should stoop to light a fire. Then he said : " Your scout will be in at six, sir," and vanished.

Martin turned to survey the room. On the walls were some extraordinary banners or ribbons, on two of which were the words :

Ahwamkee University.

There were some photographs, plainly American, and a large engraving called ' Love's Pathway.' On the wide expanse of shelves there stood six lonely books—five large volumes on Law and the Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám. At the beginning of each was written : ' E libris Theo. K. Snutch.' Martin was tempted to amend the inscription to ' E libris sex Theo. K. Snutch.' On the mantelpiece were some athletic trophies. Mr Snutch's residence at Oxford, at three hundred a year, was not altogether unjustified : he could terrifically throw the hammer.

Next, Martin found a penny paper called *The University* and eagerly glanced through it to discover the quality of Oxford journalism. There were jokes about Socialists with red ties and there was an open letter to the varsity heavy-weight boxer. It began, 'Dear Chuckles,' and ended with best wishes for 'the dear little girl who will some day take the ring with you.' The reader was not even spared the allusion to the possible appearance of 'Chucklets.'

"My god!" said Martin. He began to wonder whether he hadn't made a mistake in refusing to go to Cambridge.

The room was depressing, so he put on his overcoat and walked out into the rain : he went down St Olde's to the river. In those days horse-drawn trams still rattled slowly through the streets, making a feeble pretence of antiquity. It angered Martin that in this town, with its new yellow banks and new college buildings, such hypocrisy should go on and that people should confuse the relics of medieval squalor with the works of medieval beauty. He came from a clean town of the hills, and the clinging dirt and the sordid grime and meanness of St Ebbs seemed haunting and insistent. Before Tom Tower and the spacious splendour of Christ Church there was a common slum ; he had never pictured Oxford a place of slums. The Thames, too, had been in flood for two or three weeks, and in the playing-fields across the river goal-

posts stood up amid acres of water, gauntly desolate. As he passed out along the Abingdon Road he found meadows where the floods had receded and left the grass rotten and stinking. The straggling squalor of Oxford's edge only served to increase his despair : he had expected to find a city with dreaming spires, and so far he had found merely a slum, with yellow gasworks. Only now and then did he catch a glimpse which charmed him. As he turned back and climbed the hill to Carfax he began to loathe the place. But it must be remembered that he had had an inadequate lunch and was under the shadow of an exam.

On returning to Snutch's rooms he found that the fire had almost gone out. With the aid of *The University* he managed to create a fitful gleam, but it gave no heat. Someone was moving about in the rooms opposite, another scholarship candidate presumably, a rival—damn him ! Martin began to think about tea : he did not know what to do and his scout was not coming till six. Ultimately he went out to the Cadena Café : it was full of young women from North Oxford who sat in mackintoshes, feeding with desperate gaiety.

After he came back to Snutch's rooms and read a shilling novel which he had found in the bedder. Soon after six the scout appeared and told Martin that he could dine in the hall at seven : he was a large, grimy man and sniffed prodigiously. Dinner in hall

was very trying. Half-a-dozen dons sat at the high table trying to pretend by forced conversation that they were not thoroughly sick of one another : about thirty schoolboys sat shyly on the long benches, apprehensive, miserable. Here and there would be two from the same school, chatting with animation and appearing to be very much in the know about Life and the varsity : elsewhere strangers were huddled together, some silent, others making fiftul conversation. Financial distinctions were not forgotten, and the candidates from Public Schools had gravitated to one table, those from Grammar Schools to another. Martin found himself by the side of a red-faced, ingenuous boy, who asked for the water and then said :

“The Harlequins are better than ever this year.”

Martin assented, and added : “What’s your school ?”

“Rugby. What’s yours ?”

“I’m from Elfreys. Have you anyone else in here ?”

“No. We had four up for Balliol this year.”

“That’s a lot. Are the results out ?”

“Yes, this afternoon. We got a schol. and an exhibition.”

“That was jolly good.”

The dialogue became more and more technical and immensely dull.

The Rugbeian was plainly a bore and after dinner Martin fled from the college : he found a new cinema in Broad Street and went in. Presently some under-

graduates who were stopping up for a few days at the end of term came cheerily in and shouted vaguely.

An obsequious manager pleaded with them and they wandered down the gangway looking for company : it did not seem very hard to find. Martin watched their progress with interest and began to wonder whether the girl next him wanted to talk. She had dropped her wrist-bag once and he had picked it up : during the course of the proceedings his eye had been caught by the glitter of a light grey stocking. She wasn't, he had to admit, beautiful. But she was alone, and so was he. Did she, on the other hand, want him to talk ? The dropping of the bag might have been an accident. Besides, what did one say ? Martin cursed his inexperience and racked his brains for a conversational lead. He could hardly make some remark about the films : that would be obvious and heavy. Something light was wanted : but what ? Why on earth couldn't she drop the bag again ? He would take the hint this time. His mind became a blank and he felt acutely miserable. At the end of the film he rose and walked away in despair. He stopped at the back of the hall and noticed one of the varsity men glance round and then move quickly into his place before the lights were again turned out. Martin returned to college, read some more of Snutch's novel, and went to bed.

Till Friday night Martin was kept hard at work

doing papers in the college hall. On Tuesday morning he had to write an essay on the relations of the artist and the State, an obvious subject, perhaps, but pleasing. It was the only paper which he enjoyed. Afterwards he was kept hard at work with Unseens and Compositions. Never in his life had he felt more irritable or more intellectually impotent. The yellow blanket of mist hung over Oxford continually: the hall smelled abominably of stale gravy and recent meals, and, worst of all, the pens supplied to such as did not bring their own were quills; consequently the stuffy room was never free from a maddening scratch and squeak. A youth with a sloping brow and waving, faultless hair who sat next Martin made great play with his quill: he was a 'dog' whose doggishness took the form of a graceful abandon in his dress; he wore soft collars and long woolly waistcoats and dilapidated pumps. He held his quill between his first and second fingers, and he wrote splashily with brave flourishes and a spasmodic squeak; also he had a habit of marching out majestically half-an-hour before the time for a paper was finished. Martin wondered whether this implied that he was immensely bad or immensely good: he feared the latter. Altogether he was a fascinating and disconcerting neighbour, and one morning Martin, struggling with verses that would not 'come,' wanted to kill him.

Another cause of depression was the presence of boys

from Grammar Schools. Martin was no snob, but he could not keep himself unspotted from Public School tradition, and he felt that these smug-looking youths were rivals in a way that the dull Rugbeian never could be. He was certain that they were far better scholars than he was, that they had worked like slaves and could translate anything ever written in Greek or Latin : he might have escaped much mental suffering had he known that, even if they had been so brilliant (and in reality they were amazingly dull), the dons are, with a few exceptions, well rooted in class tradition and are not going to sacrifice the Public Schools on the altar of modern honesty. But Martin did not know these things, and when he saw the Grammar School candidates parading the town with little crested caps on the backs of their heads and greasy curls sticking bravely up in front, the natural dislike of the rival was fused with the Public School man's loathing of inferior form. There was one unforgettable person who came every day to King's wearing a black overcoat and black kid gloves : his cap had a little silver button gleaming over the inevitable curl. He looked both wise and good.

On the Thursday evening Martin glanced through the rough copy of his Latin verse. There he found—

“*via strata patebat*  
*Hostibus ; arduentes surgunt ducemque sequuntur.*”

True that the lines did not sound beautiful : in a copy



of twenty-two lines you must have one or two dull moments. But "via strata" and "ducem"—two false quantities in a line and a half. How could he have done it? He flung the rough copy into the fire and swore violently. Silver Button wouldn't make false quantities: Silver Button would have learned about 'dux' and 'duco' when he was twelve—so had Martin. But then Silver Button wouldn't, couldn't, forget. Martin was convinced now that, as far as a scholarship was concerned, he might as well never have entered.

He wandered morosely into the streets: it started to rain and he took refuge in the cinema. For half-an-hour he watched the films and, more particularly, an amorous couple in front. A girl came and sat on his right: she was distinctly attractive and her chin, poised daintily in the air, conveyed an exquisite invitation: the rest of her face was hidden by hat. He began to feel, as before, self-conscious and miserable. This time he would speak, must speak . . . but how? The couple in front had reached their limit in proximity. Suddenly her foot touched his and with a surreptitious glance he saw below the brim of that entrancing hat. She was perfect. She had taken off her glove and her hand lay on her lap: before Martin knew what he was doing, he had taken it and pressed it. The girl turned abruptly round, snatched her hand away, and said coldly:

"Please leave me alone."

Martin obeyed, blushing furiously. "I'm very sorry," he muttered, but she took no notice. He sat gazing in front of him, humiliated and tortured. What a fool he had been! Why hadn't he said something and made an opening?

The film clicked monotonously on. One fact alone flamed across his mind: he must get out before the film was over. He couldn't endure the raising of the lights. But either he would have to crush past the girl on his right or else go out to the left, a journey which would involve forcing his way through a long row of stout people. Both alternatives were unpleasant.

The film was ending. The music had ceased to ripple and begun to sob, always a proof of impending embraces. The hero and heroine were rolling great lurid eyes at one another. The lights went up. Martin pushed his way out to the left past the stout and sulky: then he hurried back through the rain to Snutch's gloomy chambers. There was nothing to do but to contemplate his own blunders classic and modern. He told himself that he had made a rotten shot and received a nasty snub. If he had only been aiming at something worth having, he wouldn't have minded. But what, after all, was the use of a girl to him? And why on earth had he wanted to grab her sticky hand—for it had been sticky. He knew now that he hadn't really wanted to do it, for its own sake: he

had wanted to do it because other people did it. Now it all seemed so hugely silly. "I suppose love's all right," he thought to himself. "But this hand and kiss business is piffle."

On Friday evening Martin returned to Elfrey in a state of advanced pessimism. Early in the next week he learned that he had been elected to a classical scholarship at King's College. He gazed blankly at the telegram and the words 'via strata' and 'ducem' flashed before his mind.

It was quite incredible, but it was true.

## XII

MARTIN spent his last two terms without effort and without emotion. The fact that he was a scholar elect of King's College, Oxford, caused him to feel in some strange way that his career was made and that there was nothing more to be done. So he chattered to Finney on Sunday afternoons, read poetry (condescendingly now) at Mrs Berney's Saturday soirées, and enjoyed the modern novelists when he should have been doing his prep. He had found a copy of Butler's *Way of All Flesh* in his uncle's study: this he read with joy and lent to the more worthy members of the Upper Sixth. A book with an appeal so universal naturally made an effect: it seemed to crystallise the religious experience of all. Martin was eager to discover whether Foskett had read it and consequently alluded to it at some length in an essay on 'Recent Aspects of Evolution,' in which he courageously let himself go. Foskett made no allusion to Butler and merely wrote on the last sheet: 'Good, but lacks balance. Don't dogmatise on subjects of this kind. Many of your ideas, though well put, are crude.' Martin groaned as he read the criticism. If Foskett had been a bigoted parson and had lectured him on the

perils of free thought, he could have looked on himself as a martyr and enjoyed the nursing of a grievance : if, on the other hand, the strength and sincerity of the essay had been genuinely praised, Martin's vanity would have been gratified. But this kindly tolerance, so well meant, was infuriating ; it was typical Foskettism. Perhaps what contributed most to Martin's disgust was the lurking suspicion that his ideas were, after all, a trifle crude.

With Foskett, Martin was never in sympathy. He was out of touch with all the causes for which Foskett stood, and it was among the small set of desperately serious and religious boys that the headmaster found his champions. The very fact that he had not taken orders seemed to them, perhaps justly, proof of the deepest faith : in after life they would all have signed photographs in their studies and point him out to their sons. 'That's old Foskett,' they would say. 'Fine character. Great influence.' But the popular verdict was against Foskett. The really strong man can get his way without criticism : he says 'Do' and people just crumple up and do it. When Foskett said 'Do,' things were done as a rule, but the doer had a habit of saying, as he went grudgingly to his work : 'Silly ass, thinks he's a Blood-and-ironer.' Martin said of him to his uncle : 'He's quite efficient and all that, and he's bound to get on. As crushers go, he might be a lot worse.'

And that was the common view.

Foskett took the Upper Sixth in composition and Greek plays. Martin could not help admiring Foskett's fair copies which showed undoubted feeling for the classical languages, but he could never quite endure his enthusiasm for the Greek drama. When Foskett enjoyed literature in public, it always seemed as though he was saying sternly to himself: 'This is good stuff and we've got to like it.' He would stride up and down the room with the text of a play, chanting the iambics or the choruses as though they were everything in the world to him, and all the time Martin felt that it couldn't mean so much to him, just because he sought beauty with a fervour so literary and so incessant. With Martin, appreciation was a thing of moods, coming swiftly and as swiftly departing: he could not understand how Foskett's enjoyment remained always at high pressure: it must, he thought, be artificial. Foskett's affection for Euripides was the most unconvincing of enthusiasms: how could a man so far removed from Euripides in taste and temperament really appreciate that passionate rebel of genius? Martin could have tolerated an open enemy, a thorough conservative who called Euripides a botcher, and a dirty-minded botcher at that: but Foskett's liberal attitude, sweetly reasonable to the extent of being nauseous, was harder to endure. It was not so much that Foskett had set out to like Euripides because

Euripides was fashionable once again, though that of course was possible: but it was his determination to be fair at all costs that was fatal. Foskett was so pertinaciously fair, so eager to do justice to both sides of the literary problem that Martin considered that he didn't in the end properly understand or sympathise with either side. It occurred to him that compromise is always necessary in human affairs and usually fatal. And so while Foskett declaimed the *Electra* and gave out the points to be noticed for and against such treatment of the tragic theme, Martin shuddered and sometimes sulked. Intellectual isolation is not good for the manners, and Foskett found Martin difficult: the two remained always at a distance, never openly hostile, and never sympathetic.

Few Public School boys are critical of the institutions amid which they are brought up, but it was natural for Martin to ponder, as he idled through his last two terms, on the value of the things he had learnt and of the habits in which he had been trained. He had been interested in H. G. Wells' pungent comments on the way we manage education, and he was fascinated by the sweeping schemes of reconstruction. Was all this classical business, he asked himself, just a waste of time and effort? Was he just groping at the door of a treasure-house whose contents had long ago been rifled? He resolved to consult Finney.

Though Finney was now always charitably treated

by the Upper Sixth, his warfare with the Upper Fourth was telling on him. Even in a few months he had lost vivacity and ambition, for he was beginning to suffer from the spiritual blight that attacks every unsuccessful schoolmaster in his time. In a year or two he would be shrivelled up into an irritable bunch of nerves, his ability wasted, his hopes stifled. Martin could foresee no escape for Finney, unless by some lucky chance he could get back to Oxford: but that was impossible, for those who leave Oxford rarely return.

Finney was willing enough to talk, but Martin was disappointed with the conversation. He was a Liberal both in politics and disposition, and as a result he had no point of view: he was angry about things and could suggest little reform, but there was no comprehensive unity or vitality in his ideas. He was the kind of man who makes great play with the word 'efficiency.'

"We aren't clear enough," he used to say, "about what we want. We chatter airily at congresses about education, but we never really formulate our wants and bully people into doing things. We don't train our teachers or tell them what is needed . . . we just plug them down. Besides the schools aren't to blame: we've got to keep in touch with the two big varsities, and if they insist on everybody mugging up just enough Greek to be a nuisance, we've got to see about the mugging.

"And on the other side there are the parents. We



don't get the boys till they are thirteen or fourteen, fashioned all ready in many ways. I don't know what the parents do want, but they certainly don't want education. Ask any housemaster about the letters they write: they're nearly always economic. Why does this cost extra and why doesn't Harry get that free?"

"I suppose that's fairly natural," said Martin.

"Of course. But it shouldn't be all. It's typical of the British attitude. You buy your son an education costing so much, as you would buy him a suit of clothes. They don't care twopence about the teaching or the curriculum, except in so far as it concerns passing exams and leads to money. Parents write about Tom's chances for Sandhurst, but who ever writes about his classics? It's all taken for granted, even its sickening narrowness. No one ever heard of a parent slanging the headmaster because his son didn't know who wrote *The Alchemist* or because he thought Chopin was a music hall comedian."

"Do you suppose," asked Martin, "that fifty per cent of the Elfreyan parents know there is a play called *The Alchemist*?"

"Well, I wouldn't bet on it," said Finney. "Still there it all is. Ignorance and muddle. We've got so horribly linked up. Union may be strength, but strength may be tyranny. Capital is all knotted together. Labour soon will be, and Education is in

the same way. We can't change without the others changing, the others can't change without the varsities——"

"And the varsities won't change till public opinion blows them to bits," added Martin. "So it all comes back to the dear old *vox populi*."

"I suppose so," said Finney wearily. "Come and have some tea."

Although he found Finney's suggestions disappointing, Martin continued to ponder occasionally on the phenomena of school life, and when he went to Devonshire for the Easter holidays he took the opportunity of questioning his uncle, for whose views he had a great respect. John Berrisford was always willing to talk after his third glass of port and he welcomed Martin's questions.

"Of course you know," he said, "that though I'm a revolutionary in politics and economics, I'm a sound Tory about institutions and the things that matter, like beef and beer. So I believe in the Public Schools and the Universities, not because they're good, but because they *are*. Everything that is, must be an expression of human nature, and, being rather an optimist, I think it has some good in it. Anyhow, we can't take human nature and twist it about, as social reformers want to do. The people who cry out for Censors of Art seem to imagine that Art makes public opinion. It may do so now and then, but it's

much more important to realise that public opinion makes current art. Art is the emergence of what people are feeling and thinking, and our schools, like our art, must be an expression of the national self."

"But the national self," said Martin, "is pretty stiff."

"That is true, but it doesn't matter. My idea is that, being Englishmen, we ought to make the best of it. Smash international capitalism, which is hellish, and stick to any good things England can give. Of course if you like to turn your destructive criticism on our school system you can knock it to pieces in a minute, just as you can knock out Socialism, or the Co-operative Commonwealth, or any other sensible proposition. A half-educated person can criticise anything; it takes a man to appreciate.

"No, it's no use battering the Public Schools. They are there, so let's make the best of them. They may not teach very much, but men learn to behave reasonably and not to get on one another's nerves. Tell me: if you had to live on a desert island for six months with one other man, would you take a chap with ideas who had been co-educated or privately educated and generally fad-educated or an unintellectual but reasonable man from Elfrey, a person you could always rely on, if it was only to be dull?"

Martin wanted the Elfreyan.

"Well, that says a lot for the schools. You can't

smash them until you have smashed the British Character : of course that would be a capital thing to do, but it's a stiff proposal, and while we are waiting let's make the best of it. I quite expect that at times you must have been sick to death of Elfrey, but didn't you like it on the whole ? ”

“ I think I did,” answered Martin reflectively.

“ Exactly. You liked the chaps, because, with all their intellectual limitations, they're reliable. You know they won't play dirty tricks behind your back. You liked your study and you liked cooking enormous and hideously indigestible meals and gorging until all was blue. You liked shutting the window on a cold night and collecting a crowd and raising such a frowst that the air was solid and the windows steamed. You liked smoking your secret cigarette and discussing who was going to be the school wicket-keeper three years hence and who was the worst bat in first-class cricket. Am I right ? ”

“ Absolutely.”

Mr Berrisford started a new cigar with satisfaction. “ Good. Then the system hasn't altered altogether. Oh yes, and you liked some of your classics ? ”

“ Most of them, when I could escape the notes and grammarian's drivel.”

“ The classics are worth sticking to. It's no good these scientists talking about translations being as good. They aren't and there's an end of it. Good trans-

lations have their uses, but they aren't the real thing. We don't read Homer to find out what happened. So let's thank God for Homer and philosophy and leave psychology and applied mechanics to the Life Force."

Mr Berrisford had certainly a definite point of view, and he did not fall between the two stools of acceptance and sweeping reconstruction as Finney seemed to. So Martin was not only amused but influenced and on his return to Elfrey for the summer term gave up worrying about the pros and cons of Public School education. He determined to enjoy himself, and he knew that in order to enjoy himself he must have an interest. It couldn't be concerned with art, because in that case he would have to keep it to himself. It must be a common interest, a part of school life. Ultimately, he fixed upon the bowling of googlies.

His batting had always been respectable and had won him a place in his house team for two summers, and now, as Rayner was likely to be engaged in school matches, or practice games, Martin became house captain on most afternoons. Ever since the day when, as a small boy being tried in 'firsts,' he had shivered with terror in the field and dreaded more than death itself the agony of the fumbled catch, he had always envied house captains. Now was his chance: he could become a slow bowler. He believed that most things in this world can be achieved by bluff and a little hard work, and it seemed a simple thing to get wickets

if you had unlimited power of keeping yourself on and had terrorised your fielders into holding on to anything. And so, weary of the Upper Sixth and Foskett and even Finney, and wearier far of wondering whether the Public Schools were right, and how and when the Trade Unions would take them over, he found comfort in the googly.

During the holidays he had put up a stump on the Berrisfords' lawn, and practised leg-breaks, waiting patiently for the desired freak which should turn from the off. Sometimes it had come, but Martin never had the least notion why it came: still the essential and undeniable fact was that it had come. On the second night of term he put it to Rayner that he was intending to bowl googlies.

"My hat!" said Rayner. "And you'll be house captain usually!"

"Exactly," answered Martin. "That is the point."

Rayner smiled grimly. "Think of the house, old man!" he exclaimed.

"I shall. Really I do break both ways."

"And how often do you bounce?"

"That depends. Anyhow it's the googly man's privilege to pitch one ball in six on his own toss. Have you ever seen young Jack Hearne?"

Rayner neglected the question. "Look here!" he said, "are you really going to bowl?"

"Rather! But I'll make you an offer. If I don't

take ten wickets in the first fortnight with an average under eighteen, I'll never do it again."

"Done!" said Rayner confidently.

Martin triumphantly kept his side of the agreement. The ordinary house pitches were rough and ready, the ordinary house player a slogger. Martin's ordinary ball was well pitched up and apparently simple. But he had had his eye on two or three small boys in the junior team who, though poor bats, could run like hares in 'the country' and hold on to anything they touched. These he translated to the first, to the vast indignation of several clumsy hitters who were moved down in their stead. The policy was a success. Martin used to go on first before the other side were set and occasionally got a victim in the slips or enticed a steady man in front of his wicket. Then he made way for orthodox 'fast rights,' but after the fall of five or six wickets he would polish off the tail with atrocious slow stuff. His small boys were scattered far away and interfered considerably with an adjacent game: they had plenty to do and were given an ice for every catch they held. Martin soon found it an expensive amusement and became extremely unpopular with the tenants of the neighbouring pitch.

He never sulked if he were 'knocked off,' an unusual trait in a house captain and a cause of popularity with his team. And the fielders knew that he only pretended to mind when catches were dropped:

Martin was incapable of being ruffled by a mere game. As a result the eleven played keenly and with efficiency. Though Berney's had only one man, Rayner, in the school eleven they succeeded in reaching the final of the Cock House matches. They were to play, just before the end of term, their old enemy, Randall's.

Martin now became thoroughly engrossed in cricket. He neglected to work for one or two school prizes, but he knew that he could get a leaving scholarship without difficulty. Thus he became a more prominent figure in the house and was, on the whole, much happier than in the days of reading and thinking. He abandoned Wells the social theorist for Wells the fantastic romancer and combined *Wisden's Almanac* with Arnold Bennett for his literature in prep-time. He knew now that he couldn't bowl googlies at all: on the house pitches it depended on the lie of the land which way the ball broke. But he kept up the fraud for his own amusement, and continued to take the wickets to which his confidence entitled him.

The school were laying five to one on Randall's, who had far the better record and were as usual a hard-hitting, level, ugly lot. Berney's won the toss and only made a hundred and thirty on a good wicket. Martin's first ball bumped a little and he poked it into slip's hands: Rayner made twelve and was run out. The runs were made by Martin's small protégés, who scored by fluky shots over and through the slips.



It was a disgraceful display. Randall's knocked up two hundred and fifty. Martin was bowling unusually well and consequently never looked like taking a wicket. The batsmen played forward correctly and stayed for hours. Even when in despair he tossed up the most tempting half-volleys, they were content to play him along the ground for one. Randall's never risked anything when a cup was at stake.

In the second innings Rayner put up a fine century and Martin made a pleasing thirty: had he resisted the temptation to cut "the uncuttable," he would have stayed in and served his house better. But Martin could not play cricket in that spirit. The rest did little this time and Randall's was left with only eighty to make.

The score stood at fifty for two when Rayner, who was, of course, captain when he played for the house, put on Martin to bowl. Spectators were moving to the tuck-shop to drown grief or express elation. Martin knew that it was all over and sent down, by way of a change, a fast, straight ball. Randall's captain was expecting something very different, mistimed it, and was bowled: his successor scraped nervously at a leg-break and was caught at the wicket. The next man survived three balls: the last delivery of the over was monstrous. It was pitched very short and went slowly away to leg: the batsman hit under it and was taken far out. A gift indeed. The score was now fifty for

five wickets and the tuck-shop began to empty again.

Randall's were not the sort of people one suspected of having nerves. But to lose three wickets in one over of the last innings is startling, and Randall's were rattled, despite their stodginess. Martin's second over was weak in direction and pitiable in length, but he might have been Barnes for the respect he received. It was another maiden. Martin knew well enough that if one batsman had the sense to go for his bowling and treat it according to its merits the match was finished. He took another wicket with a slow leg-break and then a brawny youth named Coxwell came in. He had been warned by his frantic housemaster 'to lash at 'em.' He did so and scored three fours in succession.

During Martin's next over Coxwell was at his end. He saw now that the secret was discovered and that Randall's would knock off their runs with impunity: he could imagine the gloating joy of Randall's, all the greater because victory had been in doubt: Berney's would be in the position of the mouse set free and recaptured. In his anger Martin bowled an amazing ball. He had really meant to send up a "googly," but it pitched half-way to the wicket and scarcely left the ground. The batsman drove it back and Martin, stooping quickly, just touched it with his left hand: the ball crashed into the wickets. Coxwell, who was backing-up, was a yard outside the crease. The

batsman who might have won the match had been run out by a gross fluke. "The stars in their courses," said Martin to Rayner, as they waited for the next man. The score was sixty-five for seven.

Martin took all three remaining wickets, or rather the batsmen handed him their lives. They came in half dead with fear (was not a cup at stake ?) and demanded their own extinction. The first played forward to a slow half-volley and was caught and bowled, the next put his leg in front of the straight ball on the leg stump, the last was caught off a slow full toss. That was how Berney's won the cup.

Rayner walked home silently with Martin. "You great man !" was all he could say.

"It was the great god Funk," answered Martin. "They just asked to get out."

"You certainly bowled muck," admitted Rayner. "But it was all sheer joy."

And though they pretended to treat the matter as a great jest, they both felt a very genuine pleasure because they had won the cup for Berney's.

That evening the captain of the School Eleven, who had heard that Martin had taken seven wickets for twelve and thereby rendered Berney's cock house, gave him his Second Eleven colours. He had not seen Martin bowl.

Martin took the news to Rayner. "Well that," said Rayner, "fairly puts the lid on it."

Together they shook the walls with laughter. Life is occasionally dramatic, and the finale of Martin's school career had certainly a touch of comedy.

It is commonly believed that boys undergo regrets and deep emotions when they leave school. But Martin noticed that only a few Elfreyans were moved at the thought of saying good-bye : some were charmed by the prospect of entering a world of unlimited smokes and drinks and girls and motor bicycles, others by the prospect of intellectual as well as practical freedom. There were some who really regretted the end of life's first act, boys who had enjoyed the games and the friendships and were now passing to office work without the freedom of three or four years' residence at the university. But those who were more fortunate were eager as a rule to be up and off. Martin had been amused by his last term with its athletic adventures and he had come to appreciate to the full his uncle's advice about making the best of existing institutions. Rayner, too, was a good sort and an excellent friend. But the prospect of Oxford, notwithstanding his gloomy foretaste of the place, attracted him undeniably —no, he could not be moved.

On the last Sunday night Foskett delivered an address and ended with a special appeal to those who were leaving to remember the honour and welfare of their house and their school as well as their king and country. But Martin was wondering all the time whether it

were more satisfactory to have won colours for good, solid cricket or to have extorted a cup by mere bluff. There was something pleasant indeed in the thought that a real cricketer would go on with his career, whereas Martin would never dare to call himself a bowler at Oxford : on the other hand, there was an exquisite piquancy in the consideration that he had set out to ' do ' cricket and had very successfully done it. Also he had ' done ' Randall's, and he was still boy enough to hate the rival house with a fervent loathing. As the organ thundered out the farewell hymn, he decided that to succeed in a fraud which does no real harm is a very gratifying process. Then he pulled himself together and sang dutifully.

### XIII

MARTIN spent August and September at The Steading. The weather was kind and he could lounge and play tennis to his heart's content. In his spare moments he read Homer and Virgil, marking the hard passages with a blue pencil, according to advice. His cousin Robert, who had just finished his third year at Balliol, was working in a frenzy of confusion and despair. He had devoted the whole previous year to becoming President of the Union and, having gained his end, was now endeavouring to condense all his Greats work into one year. He had foolishly given way to panic, which meant that his work was as unintelligent as it was ferocious. In the mornings he read Thucydides and Cicero's Letters, smoking and swearing continuously. Martin used to sit in the same room reading his Homer, but concentration was rendered difficult by Robert's habit of roaring when he came to a speech in the text of Thucydides. And when the roar was over he would mutter in his distress :

"But the seeming firmness of those who will join in the contest is not the actual loyalty of those who brought it on, but if, on the other hand, anyone has much the greater advantage . . ." Having progressed

so far, he would look up and say: "Did I speak? I'm sorry!" Then he would return sorrowfully to his speech.

In the evenings Robert read Bradley's *Logic and Appearance and Reality*; if Martin came into the room he would be met with an outburst on philosophy.

"It's all bunkum," Robert used to assert, throwing Bradley (library copy) across the room. "Just organised bunkum. I suppose philosophers have to make up some twaddle to justify their salaries, but they might have spared us the Absolute!"

Robert was very angry about the Absolute and used to draw obscene pictures of it, adding appropriate lyrics. Martin came to the conclusion that Greats must be bad for the temper, but he was not troubled by the reflection that some day he himself would be a sufferer, for no sane person of eighteen thinks more than a year in advance.

He began now to feel a growing dignity and responsibility. Plainly he was no longer a schoolboy, not even a god-like prefectorial schoolboy, but an undergraduate and a man of the world. Such status implied duties, and he made efforts to cultivate a manner: he smoked a pipe openly instead of cigarettes in secret: he also set about the task of liking wine. This did not turn out to be so big a business as his first experiences had led him to expect.

Further, he began to prefer his tennis mixed: he

had been happier before when there were only men and they could have a hard-hitting, vigorous set. But now he wanted to display his newly acquired American service and deadly smashes at the net to the girls who hit patiently from the back line: he was inwardly ashamed of this desire to make an impression on girls, but there it undeniably was.

Margaret Berrisford he had always taken for granted. She was a year older than he was and very often she went away, for her father was taking every precaution to save her from the usual limitations of the squire's daughter. They were cousins and good friends and scarcely ever spoke to each other alone: they merely said 'Good-morning' and 'Good-night' and played tennis together. Because they were practically members of the same family they never took the trouble to find out about one another. Margaret had beauty of a subtle, unimposing kind and a strong athletic figure: moreover, she had brains and could talk. Her interests were wide and she had an astonishing fund of information. If she had been precipitated suddenly into the house as a visitor Martin would certainly have fallen in love with her. As it was, the idea never occurred to him.

It remained, as frequently happens, for a married woman to inflict the first wound.

One afternoon at the end of September Martin was leaving the tennis lawn after a vain effort to play in the



failing light on dew-soaked grass. He had stayed behind to collect the balls and was walking slowly with three folded deck-chairs in one hand, while with the other he carried the balls on his racket. Suddenly he became aware of voices and almost ran into Mrs Berrisford and a stranger. He was introduced to Mrs Cartmell.

"You can't very well shake hands," she observed. "We're going in. Suppose I take the balls."

"Oh, please don't bother," said Martin.

But Mrs Cartmell grasped the racket and took it from him without dropping any of the balls.

"Thanks very much," Martin remarked. "Do you play tennis?"

"In a feeble kind of way. I'm out of practice too."

"We'll put that all right," said Mrs Berrisford.

"The court is quite dry, up to tea-time," added Martin eagerly. "The dew is very heavy later on and it gets dark soon, but it's all right if you play early."

Martin's keenness amused Mrs Cartmell. "Of course I should love to play," she said.

To his own astonishment Martin felt greatly relieved.

Godfrey Cartmell was prospective Radical candidate for the division. To pass away the time he had been called to the Bar, but he never had any need or any inclination to practise. At Oxford he had, like most people, been President of the Liberal Club, and his faith was nebulous but genuine. He had had the good sense to marry a capable woman who carried him

off maternally and saw to it that he didn't hang about any longer, but made his terms with the Whips at once. Viola Cartmell was neither egoistic nor vulgar, but she combined ambition with practical driving power, and she had eaten the bread of obscurity far longer than she liked. Godfrey had chances, but she saw that he had picked up during his first-class education a capacity for doing nothing in a very charming manner. She had already made him a candidate : she intended to make him a success.

The Cartmells were close friends of the Berrisfords, and it was through the connection that Godfrey had been introduced to the local Liberal Association. Now they had come down to look round : the seat was held by a Tory but had sound Radical traditions, so that a change was not impossible. Naturally Godfrey Cartmell spent much of his time with the agent : his wife thought it more tactful not to be too conspicuous at first, for she had resolved that, when the time arrived, she was to direct the campaign. So she had time to play tennis and go for walks and make, quite unwittingly, a conquest.

It was certainly not with any feminine charms that Viola Cartmell won Martin's adoration : rather it was by reason of her difference from the average girl who came to play tennis or to visit the Berrisfords. There was no need to talk down to her or to make conversation, no need to take the initiative and play the gallant

male. Viola neither patronised Martin, as did the men who came to the house, nor expected patronage, as did the girls. She treated him as an equal and talked about reasonable things; she had ideas and could think clearly. If a man had expressed her views Martin would have been interested, but the fact that they came from a woman rendered them doubly attractive. During the vacation Martin had begun to form a vision of the perfect woman: it had been the ideal that appeals to most intelligent boys at some period of their adolescence, the union of masculine mind and female beauty. He was old enough now to be troubled by sex, not as something abstract that might crop up in a theoretical future, but as a present pain and pleasure: in his growing restlessness he tended inevitably to find his ideal personified in every woman who was not quite a fool, the wish being always father to the thought. Viola Cartmell's masculine attributes, her managing ways, and her power of thought and argument gave him a genuine excuse for setting her on his pedestal. Yet Martin's attitude was one of adoration, not of passion. Quite apart from the manifest impossibility of making love, apart too from the fact that, even if circumstances had allowed, he did not know how to make love, he did not even want to make love. He wanted to be with her, to watch her, above all to talk with her: and that was the limit of his desires.

On the tennis court Margaret and he were too strong

for Robert and Viola ; accordingly the two Berrisfords fought great battles against the visitors and as a rule prevailed. But they were not invincible. Once Martin and Viola had lost two sets in succession and in the third the score was five-three and forty-fifteen against them. Viola had said, " Now we're going to win," and Martin had performed the most impossible feats at the net, smashing and cutting and getting back for the lob.

Martin finished the set with a perfect drive down the said line.

" Wimbledon," said Robert, making no effort to reach it.

As they went in to tea his partner smiled upon him and said : " You were simply wonderful."

That moment gave him greater joy than he had ever gained from the avenging of Gideon or the conquest of Randall's with fraudulent googlies.

On the last day of his holidays (it is a nice point whether the two months before a man goes up to the university are to be called 'summer hols' or 'long vac') a discussion was held after breakfast as to procedure. Robert was sorry, but he had to give himself to the Ethics : he had one day in which to settle the business of friendship and pleasure (long neglected), and he had discovered to his horror that some pieces of Aristotle must be learned by heart with a view to translation. Margaret had to go to

a dentist at Plymouth. At last Martin asked Viola Cartmell to come out on the moor and to his joy she assented.

They went by car to Merivale Bridge and then climbed up to Maiden Hill and Cowsic Head. It was a superb October day. A great south wind came up from the sea, salt and stinging but with no load of rain. Down in the village the autumn had kindled the first fire in the woods and no hue of flame was absent from the leaves. Shimmering with green and yellow, gold and copper, the boughs made music for ear and eye. And on the moor there was the wind and the sky and the infinite sweep of ridge after ridge, broken with harsh tors and intractable granite. It may be that the brave struggle of the dying year has its effect on man, for there is something challenging in a good autumn day, something that lifts and braces a man as spring can never do. Spring, at its best, is languorous and its pleasures cloying, but autumn is a rousing friend and makes exquisite the burden of life.

As they ate their sandwiches by the Bear Down Man, Martin could not refrain from quoting :

“‘And oh the days, the days, the days,  
When all the four were off together :  
The infinite deep of summer haze,  
The roaring charge of autumn weather.’”

And indeed it was in the face of a charge as of cavalry that they fought their way down to Two

Bridges. There is rough going where the moormen have cut for peat and trenched the heathery ridges in their labour : and now, in addition to the need of leaping the rifts and skirting green morasses, they had to battle with a wind that shrieked and wrenched and gave no quarter. They talked but little until they sheltered in a hollow. Then Martin took up the thread of an earlier conversation.

“ Do you really believe in this Liberalism ? ” he asked.

“ Yes, of course.”

“ But do you think modern Liberal politics have any connection with Liberalism ? ”

“ Not much, I admit.”

“ Then I don’t understand your point.”

“ It’s quite simple. I believe vaguely in Liberalism, but we live in a busy world where everybody is far too much occupied to think about anything except business. Parliament’s busy too : it has got to get certain things done and it hasn’t time for too much idealism and spiritual attitudes and things of that sort. And when it comes to the rather dull but very necessary work of keeping things going and administering the Empire, I prefer the Liberals, because they have got leaders with brains.”

“ I see.”

“ You think me very worldly ? ”

“ Not at all. But I think you are wrong on your

own canons. Liberal leaders may be cleverer than Tory leaders, but that doesn't prove Liberalism to be efficient. Just look at things ! ”

“ And for efficiency you propose Socialism ? ”

“ Not only for efficiency. It's a philosophy as well.”

“ But we're considering efficiency. Do you really suppose you have got at your disposal the human capacity and good will and reasonableness to build up a Co-operative Commonwealth ? I don't say man hasn't the brains to plan things. He plainly has, as you can see by reading the wiser Socialists. But he hasn't a corresponding capacity for cohesion and give and take. You'll have to depend on your Labour leaders and Trade Unionists ; but just look at them ! They can only squabble and bicker and show up their jealousy and pettiness. That's where the stumbling-block lies.”

In vain Martin contested. His opponent confronted him with the old dilemma (new to him), that if, in setting up collectivism, you confiscate property, you act unjustly to many, while, if you compensate, you maintain an idle rich class. By the time that they were once more on the march, Martin was becoming a devotee of 'efficient Liberalism.' But he enjoyed his defeat. If this method and insistence had come from a man he would have felt very differently.

At last they reached Two Bridges and had tea at the hotel and waited for the car to fetch them as had been arranged. It pleased Martin to pay for the tea with

his own pocket-money (his allowance would begin to-morrow) and to refuse to listen to demands. She thought him silly for the moment, since she did not understand how much he cared.

Dinner that evening was a capital meal. John Berrisford was in his best form and kept up a lively duel with Viola Cartmell. Even Robert managed to shake off the depressing effects of Aristotle. They drank to Martin's career at Oxford.

"You're certain to like Oxford," said Godfrey Cartmell when the men were alone.

"I'm afraid I wasn't much impressed by it in December," answered Martin.

"That wasn't Oxford," interrupted Robert. "That was a dismal city in the Midlands seen at its worst."

"Exactly," said Mr Berrisford, breaking into the conversation. "Oxford isn't a place. Everybody talks about the buildings and the age and the dreaming spires. It goes down with the Yankees and the people who are proud of having read *The Scholar Gipsy*, and I suppose it keeps up the picture post card business."

"But there are good things," said Cartmell resentfully. He was of Magdalen.

"Certainly. But these things are incidental and not essential. After all, the best college—with all due respect to you, Cartmell, and to you, Martin—has a front quad like a toy castle and a chapel—well, I suppose it's the kind of chapel that particular college



ought to have, according to all tradition—a Great Speckled Warning against God. Half the most sensible people in Oxford don't know a jot about the architecture, but they know Oxford."

"Then," answered Cartmell, taking up the argument, as behoved a Liberal, seriously, "would you mind if the whole show—the educational work, I mean—were transferred to Margate or Southend or some place with a little air? On your theory that would be a very sound plan."

"It has its points," added Robert. "Just think of the progs on a seaside promenade."

"And the sea," continued his father, "is limitless. Many young men would go down to the sea in ships and have business in great waters. What a chance for enterprise! Moonlight trips round the bay."

"But seriously," said Cartmell, still smarting under the implied contempt for Magdalen's beauty.

"The port lingers at your side," was the answer. "Restore the circulation."

"Well, seriously," John Berrisford continued, when his glass had been filled again, "to move would be fatal, because the traditions would all go if you took them away from their home. But it's the traditions that count, not the place. God knows I'm willing enough to be sentimental about places. I can even enjoy hearing the song about 'Devon, glorious Devon,' sung by a Dandy Coon baritone at an audience of

Cockneys at Teignmouth. I can understand a Scottish exile in America going a hundred miles to hear Harry Lauder. To my mind places are the only things about which a man has a right to be sentimental. No causes or catch-words for me: but hills and valleys—as much as you like. That's Nationalism, and therefore Liberalism, Cartmell."

"I agree!"

"You don't, but I'll take your word. But what was I saying? Oh yes, about Oxford. Oxford is all right. I know you get the worst wine in the world there—I suppose it's specially imported for the benefit of the young men of the world who believe that anything is nectar if you pay more than ten bob a bottle for it—but you still find people drinking properly. Richly, I mean, and with conviction. I think I'd rather be a teetotaller——"

"Which God avert!" put in Cartmell.

"Amen to that. Yes, I'd rather be a True Blue than drink one glass of wine at dinner. One glass! It's an insult. Now at Oxford——"

"But, father," Robert interrupted, "the don of to-day is just the sort of person who does drink one glass of wine. With a kind of ghastly self-conscious moderation he sips some claret and then hurries off to organise a mission meeting. There aren't any good old fogeys left, only some fogeys without the merits of fogeysm. They've got consciences and think about

social reform and the possibility of all classes pulling together before the last Red Day. You know the kind of thing. By Good Will out of Nervousness."

"Well then," answered Mr Berrisford, "I'm wrong. Oxford is going to the dogs. I suppose they had to let the dons marry, but they might have foreseen that the kind of women who would pounce on the dons wouldn't understand about the good life. I expect it's the women that are destroying Oxford. When Oxford spread northwards, it spread to the devil."

"But this is downright Toryism," protested Cartmell. "You call yourself a revolutionary!"

"So I am. But I'm sound about tradition and things that matter. I don't want soaking: I want proper drinking and proper talking. I thought it might have lingered in one or two common-rooms. Anyhow, the undergraduates——"

He paused a moment and then went on:

"I remember Oxford as a place where I had some excellent pipes and never took my breakfast till I wanted it. It was a place where I worked devilish hard when I hadn't anything better to do. And I worked sensibly. No gentleman works after lunch or dinner. He walks or buys books after lunch and after dinner he talks. You must talk at Oxford, Martin."

"At debates, do you mean?"

"Not at the Union. Oh, Lord, not there. Robert has done that, and look at him. He's a broken man.

He used to spend his vacs wondering how he could get the votes of Malthusian Mongols in Worcester without losing the support of Church and State in Keble. Didn't you, Robert ? ”

“ I shall draw a veil over the past,” said Robert. “ I became President, anyhow.”

“ Be warned, Martin,” his uncle went on. “ Speak at college debates, if it amuses you. But shun a public career. Talk all night to your friends, for afterwards you won't get talk like it. You'll get shop talk and small talk and dirty talk, but at Oxford you'll get the real thing with luck.”

Martin, remembering the tastes of Theo. K. Snutch, felt doubtful.

“ Of course you'll find lots of nonsense there,” John Berrisford added. “ Lectures, for instance. They're nothing but an excuse to keep the dons from lounging : it certainly does give them an occupation for the mornings. Just think of it ! There they are, mouth-ing away term after term. Either wisely cut——”

“ Hear, hear ! ” from Robert.

“ —or laboriously taken down, by conscientious youths with fountain pens and patent note-books. I suppose the Rhodes scholars use shorthand.”

“ Possibly,” said Robert. “ Certainly they have nasty little black books to slip in their pockets like reporters.”

“ Anyhow the stuff could be got out of reputable

books in half the time with no manual labour of scribbling. Sometimes the man's lectures are actually published in book form and yet he solemnly dictates them year after year ! ”

“ But sometimes,” put in Cartmell, “ a man has got something original to say.”

“ Well,” said Robert, “ why doesn't he publish his notes at a price ? I'm quite willing to buy his knowledge, but I dislike having to waste time and trouble in a stuffy lecture-room in order to get it.”

“ The whole thing is preposterous,” his father concluded. “ But the system will last for fifty years or more. Just like the discipline. So beautifully English, they drive everything underground, make it twice as dangerous, and then pretend it doesn't exist. Instead of men having open and honourable relations with women, they'll be slinking about in back streets and snatching their kisses in taxicabs.”

“ Well,” said Martin, “ you set out to praise Oxford but you haven't made it seem very attractive.”

“ Oh ! you'll find it all right, when you come to it. If a man has got to earn his own living it's about the only time when he can live a reasonable life. You'll be able to say what you like, read what you like, go to bed when you like, get up when you like, work when you like, and, if you use a little discretion, do what you like. Don't become a slave to any one thing, the River or the Union or even the Classics. You can get

into the Civil Service without straining yourself, so make the most of your time. Doing the kind of work you like is the only really good thing in the world."

Just then Margaret opened the door and looked in.

"Father," she said, "you're booming terribly. Mother says you must come and play games."

"I never play games."

"Well, mother says you must. All of you!"

"Are we wanted at once?"

"Yes."

"Then, gentlemen, we must yield. We were born too late. The matriarchy has returned. Do you agree to that, Cartmell?"

"Certainly!"

"There was a time when no young lady would have the daring to invade the dining-room and order the men to play games. Games, indeed!"

"Don't start again, father," interrupted Margaret. "I won't budge till you do."

"Just think what you might hear!"

"Oh, I'm not a 'puffick lidy.' They passed away with the patriarchy. Now, come along!"

Games were a success because they were taken seriously. Mr Berrisford asserted that if he must waste time in that particular way he meant to do it properly. So they all exercised great ardour and ingenuity, composed pretty rhymes, and drew the strangest pictures. At the end he insisted, however,

that instead of taking famous men beginning with C, they should have infamous people. The test of infamy was to be a referendum. The game began well enough, because no opposition was raised to such people as Cicero or Christopher Columbus. But the inclusion of both Cromwell and Charles I. caused a heated argument and Cartmell was sure that they couldn't both be on one black list.

But Mr Berrisford exposed the crimes of both at great length. Crippen and Calvin both had defenders and the game at last broke up in confusion.

Martin enjoyed the evening, partly from vanity (he had done some quite clever things), and partly because he could watch Viola Cartmell without being noticed. To watch her was heavenly. There was nothing subtle or analytic in his adoration: for him there was just an indivisible whole called Viola. And that was perfect.

At eleven Robert declared that he still had some of the Ethics left and retired to find out about the contemplative life. Mr Berrisford took Godfrey Cartmell to smoke a cigar in his study and the rest prepared to go to bed.

Martin went to his room and then came back and lingered by the staircase window. As he looked out he could see a solid line of fir-trees standing out with black severity against the moonlit sky, and farther away was the long shoulder of the moor—he could see the ridge

they had climbed together and the rough peak which broke its symmetry and made its splendour.

Someone was coming up. It could only be Viola : the Berrisfords slept on the other side of the house.

It was she. Trembling, he heard the rustling of her skirts, the creaking of the stairs, her voice by his side.

"Hullo!" she said. "Star-gazing?"

"It's a great night," he answered.

She came and stood at the window. The closeness of her thrilled him.

"I wish those owls wouldn't hoot," she said. "Is that the ridge we climbed?"

"Yes. I did enjoy the walk."

"So did I! The air up there is so splendid. And it's all so gorgeously empty."

"I've been up before. But I enjoyed it much more this time."

Naturally she did not take it as he meant it.

"One doesn't often get such a perfect day, I suppose," was her answer.

Martin was at a loss. He wanted to say all sorts of things : fortunately they stuck.

She turned to go : "I'm sure you'll have a good time at Oxford and make the most of it!"

"Thank you very much. Everyone does seem to enjoy it."

"Good-night!" she said, and left him to go to her



room. The door closed behind with a sharpness that hurt.

As Martin lingered in the passage it began to occur to him that he was a silly fool, that boys of eighteen shouldn't fall in love with married women of twenty-five or even more, and that, even if they did, there was no point in being tongue-tied and nervous. But what was the good of self-reproach? He wasn't to blame if she was perfect. And she was perfect. To-morrow he would have to go up to Oxford. He would scarcely see her again. There was nothing left of her now, nothing except the boots which stood outside her door, their strong brown leather stained with the peat of Bear Down and Devil's Tor. At last he moved quickly to his room and undressed.

As he lay half naked on his bed he recalled the glories of the moor and the way they had talked. God, how she had talked! They had defied that leaping wind from whose onslaught his cheeks still burned. It had been a day of days. Then he heard Godfrey Cartmell come up and again the door closed. The sound of it hurt him. How could she waste herself on that correct, that unutterably correct, young Liberal?

Why was life so full of silliness, of waste and bungling? Why . . . but one thing was certain—he would never, never forget her.

Vol. 100, Part 1, 1970

Edited by Sir Kenneth Robinson

Published by the Royal Anthropological Institute

21, BEDFORD SQUARE, LONDON, W.C.2

Printed by the Royal Anthropological Institute

1970

Price 10s. 0d.

Net Price 8s. 6d.

Postage 2s. 6d.

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**BOOK TWO**  
**UNIVERSITY**



## I

“THESE ’ere deemagogues . . . it’s them as battens on the worker.”

Martin woke with a start. He looked round his slovenly ‘bedder’ vaguely. His scout, Mr Algernon Galer, was slowly pouring out cold water into a bath and continuing last night’s conversation. It was typical of Galer that he never dropped a conversation until he considered it completed, until, that is to say, by his fiendish ability to bore he had reduced the other side to silence. At present Martin had no other acquaintance in King’s, for he had only come up on the previous evening. On reaching his rooms he found that the cupboard had been filled with a quantity of jam and pickles and other kinds of food, all carefully opened, so that they could not be returned if disliked by the purchaser. Galer pointed them out with pride as though they testified his devotion to Martin’s welfare. There was nothing Galer did not know about the ways of looking after a fresher.

This Galer was a small, bunched-up, greasy man with a ragged black moustache, scarlet cheeks, and great watery eyes underhung by bags of loose skin. During the mornings he shuffled about the stair in a

pink shirt, green fancy waistcoat, grey flannel trousers, and lurid yellow boots ; later on he retired with a large black bag to the Iffley Road, where he was supposed to maintain a timid wife and innumerable children. It was a matter of conjecture among the residents on Galer's stair whether he wrapped up the coal in newspaper or whether the bag contained coal and food exquisitely mingled. By the afternoon the bag had always achieved a certain bulk and wore a swollen look. But it was as a politician that Galer excelled. No truer Tory than Galer ever voted for Valentia or took the Empire to heart. He did not exactly know where the map was red or how it became red ; not that that would have mattered, for Galer was not the man to be worried about little points of honesty. But he knew that much of the map was red, and he was genuinely glad about it : it seemed to him a logical inference and a capital idea that the map should be all red.

Of the catch-word he was a master. Few conversations with Galer were allowed to end without some allusion to 'Hands Across the Sea' and the Thickness of Blood (compared with water) and the 'Necessity for a Cash nexus just to symbolise the brother'ood.'

But it was the new type of 'Deemagogue' that really vexed Galer. During the previous evening Galer, after explaining to Martin the ways, the abominably expensive ways of the Oxford world, had gone on to elaborate

his favourite theme. And now, before eight o'clock in the morning, he was at it again."

"Clors against Clors," he grunted. "Wot I says is Capital and Labour 'as identical interests. Identical. These 'ere strikes plays the jimmy with both."

Martin yawned, turned over, and pretended to sleep.

"Quarter to eight, sir," continued Galer. "It was orl right when these Unions knew their proper business and kept their contrax. Wot I says is a bargain is a bargain." And with this discovery he went wheezing from the room.

Martin got up at nine, inspected the tin bath which had an inch of icy water on its blackened, paintless bottom, and concluded that it was not inviting. However, moved by his fear of Galer and a desire not to win his scout's contempt at the outset, he splashed feebly with the water. He deferred shaving and went to look at his breakfast. In the fireplace he found two poached eggs beneath a tin cover. They had been standing for over an hour and had become solid, resembling jelly with a tough crust on the edge of it. The fire had been a failure, the kettle sat in obstinate silence, and Martin ultimately made tea with water that had not boiled. The result was a greenish beverage with shoals of tea-leaves floating on the surface. There were four solid boards of toast, once endued, presumably, with the crisp seductions of youth, and an immense roll whose spongy giblets would have beaten

the strongest digestion. No one ever ate these monstrous things and what Galer did with them was another matter of conjecture. Some maintained that he fed his family on them neat : others that there was a permanent bread-and-butter pudding on the Galer menu.

Martin had come up to Oxford firmly convinced that he was about to sink into Luxury's softest lap. He found that he had to live in two dingy rooms three storeys from the ground. The "bedder" had a tiny slot of a window opening on to the kitchens of a neighbouring college : the "sitter" was slightly larger but just as dark. All the furniture, for which a heavy rent was charged, had fallen into a state of gloomy squalor suggestive rather of Camberwell than of Mayfair. The carpet, whose flagrant ugliness of colour and design was obscured by the dirt of ages, had actually given way in places and everywhere there was dust. Galer, who, with the aid of a harassed boy, had charge of nine sets of rooms, had neither the time nor the inclination to do any cleaning. He flicked cupboards with a duster in a dilettante way from time to time but further than that he never went.

Martin also discovered that the college did not contain hot baths and that the only method of procuring such a luxury was to heat a large can of water at his 'sitter' fire. All meals, except dinner, were brought through the open air across two quads and



arrived in a tepid state ; nor was this improved by the fact that Martin lived at the top of his stairs and had to wait till those below had been supplied. There was no service lift and no means of emptying slops on the stairs, and everything had to be carried up and down the tortuous steps, even the bath-water. But Galer would have been the last person to encourage the introduction of lifts; he was at least thorough in his Toryism. Dining in hall meant swallowing four abominably served courses in twenty minutes.

“ So this,” thought Martin, “ is the princely life,” and he wondered whether he would suffer the same fate as Uncle Paul, who

“ Was driven by excessive gloom,  
To drink and debt, and, last of all,  
To smoking opium in his room.”

All Saturday he was pestered by invaders who wanted him to row or be a soldier or join the National Service League, or the Men’s Political Union, or the Fabian Society, or the Tariff Reform League. In despair he joined everything, except in cases where the man talked about immediate subscriptions : then he boldly refused. But few secretaries had sufficient enthusiasm to collect money. So Martin became a member of numerous societies of the majority of which he heard nothing more. Sometimes he received a printed notice of various meetings which he did not

attend. He used to wonder vaguely who paid for all the printing . . . certainly he did not.

And so for the first two or three days of his residence he felt pestered and irritable. There were so many things to find out, such as when and where to be gowned, who were freshers and who were unapproachable seniors, what attitude to adopt to one's scout and one's tutor. It was all very perplexing, and although Martin did not suffer the acute agony of apprehension that had made terrible his first few days at Elfrey, he remained, in spite of all the hints given him by his cousin Robert, ashamed of his ignorance and fearful of mistakes.

Soon he was sent for by his future tutor, Mr Reginald Petworth. Martin found him surrounded by undergraduates who called him Reggie and conversed with unconvincing heartiness. He knew that he hadn't ever to say "sir" to a don, but he was not prepared for Christian names. However, that would only begin after a considerable acquaintance. The crowd began to melt away and he was soon the only man left.

"Well," said Petworth cheerily. "Let me see, you're——"

"Leigh."

"Oh yes, of course. You wrote some very jolly hexameters for us in the scholarship exam."

Martin was deeply astonished. Two howlers!

"Why, I thought that paper would have done for me," he said.

"Oh, you howled once or twice. But you were jolly, very jolly."

Martin was silent and Petworth produced cigarettes.

"Um, yes. Have a good vac?"

"Splendid, thanks. I was in Devonshire most of the time. Dartmoor way."

"Dartmoor is good, isn't it? I want to go down and dig about in the hut circles. I am sure they haven't done enough. Passingham of Exeter found some awfully jolly bones, besides some arrows and things. Do you like digging?"

Martin confessed that he had never tried: he would have liked to add that he found the hut circles disappointing. But he didn't dare to say so. This conversation was rather trying and he was relieved when Petworth came to business and mapped out his lectures and hours for showing up compositions.

"I'm usually in after ten," concluded the tutor. "Come up and see me and bring any questions. And don't do less than an hour a day."

"That won't kill me," said Martin.

"It's possible not to reach that standard, I find. Oxford is full of things to do. Don't do all of them."

Martin went away with a muddled impression of countless book-shelves, two excellent arm-chairs, some nice prints, a little, bright-eyed urbane man and a

general atmosphere of invincible jolliness. He was not at all sure that he liked it.

For the first week or two Martin was the unwilling but abject victim of Galerism. Galer had a way with youths and could handle even the most pronounced, aggressive, 'Damn you, I'm a man of the world' type of fresher. His influence, he knew, would never utterly die, but time would weaken it: and so in the first few days he did his best to train the new-comers on his stair in the best traditions of the college and university. Also he endeavoured to keep them from sowing political wild oats: there was nothing Galer loathed more bitterly than carrying up Radical or Socialist newspapers. Martin soon began to hate the man fervently. He wanted to find out how one could change one's rooms, for he would live in a pigsty to avoid Galer.

"Your cheese, sir," the wheezy voice would say. "I see as 'ow these deemagogues 'ave brought a lot of transport workers out. Wicked I call it. Wot the Gov'ment ought to do is to be firm. 'Ave out the troops and 'and out a bit of sleeping-draught. That's my notion of ruling. One of those there riff-raff killed a loyal worker."

"In other words, a scab," said Martin boldly.

"It's a 'orrid name to give a chap," said Galer. "I don't see no crime in bein' loyal. I 'ope you don't 'old with these paid agitators!"

"I certainly hold with Trade Unionism."

"The Trade Unions aren't wot they were. Oh no! Swelled 'ead too big for their boots and all that."

Martin made no answer and, while Galer rambled on, he saw that the only policy was to declare himself a revolutionary and have done with it. Of course Galer would despise him : but he might cease to argue.

The crisis came at lunch-time two days later.

"By the way, sir," said Galer, bread in hand, "are you 'aving a paper?"

"Yes, I start to-morrow. *Daily Herald* and *Manchester Guardian*."

Galer sniffed, threw down the food, and left the room in silence.

## II

IF Baedeker treated of Oxford colleges as he treats of Continental hotels the visitor would probably be informed that King's is 'well spoken of.' King's is small and comfortable but plainly in the first grade. No taint of specialism mars its charming mediocrity. It is not, like Balliol, aggressively successful, cornering the university scholarships and claiming half the important people in Europe as its alumni, nor does it, like New College, combine a gentle attachment to the humaner letters with supremacy on the river. It does not aspire to royalty or rugger Blues. Most class lists contain one or two firsts from King's and the King's eight never falls from the top division. The college has two excellent quads, a garden, a pleasing chapel, and some astonishing beer. Its port, however, is the worst in Oxford.

King's men were essentially Public School men. Few rich young men from Eton came to a foundation which was neither particularly notable nor particularly notorious. Wealth is not scrupulous as to which of those types it favours, but it abhors the mean. Nor did the Grammar Schools or the colonies supply more than a tithe of the college, which drew mainly upon the

middle rank of Public Schools. Herein lay both its strength and its weakness. Its strength lay in its freedom from cranks and bores, its weakness lay in its uniformity : a house which is not divided in itself may stand firm, but it is likely to be a dull and gloomy mansion.

Martin would have preferred to go to Balliol or New College, but as he was paid eighty pounds a year to go to King's there was no profit in grumbling. And so he set to work to find company, in which respect he was indeed fortunate. While many of the freshers turned out to be good men and dull, some even bad men and dull, the scholars were all interesting. The uniformity of Public School tone naturally drove the more critical together, and in Martin's year the house was saved from gloom by at least a partial cleavage. Necessity aided inclination in forming the Push.

The Push consisted of five men and contained a governing trinity. These were Martin, Lawrence and Rendell. Rendell, the first classical scholar, was attached to what the others called the ineffable effs—Fabianism, Feminism and Faith. His god was paradoxical, but not so exciting as Mr Chesterton's, and more interested in Social Reform and Municipal Trading than in beer and ballads.

Rendell managed to entertain his various faiths without becoming a prig or a Puritan. During his first months of emancipation from school he had shown

a suspicious hankering after beans and djibba-clad women, but Martin and Lawrence suppressed such tendencies with a firm hand. Rendell, though not pliable on the subject of religion, yielded on this point and soon declared his complete contempt for the eating of vegetables and drinking of ginger ale.

Lawrence was primarily noticeable for size. He was six foot three and broad in proportion: he had a ruddy and cheerful countenance and prodigious hands and feet. Essentially he believed in violence. He didn't care twopence, he declared, for Fabianism or Construction Policies and professed an intense desire to smash things, especially religion and the social system. He called himself a Neo-Nietzschean, but he certainly could not have distinguished between Neo- and Palæo-Nietzscheans. To tell the truth, he had, like many followers of that great dyspeptic, never read a word of him. Lawrence hated music, except the Marseillaise (for its associations) and the Barcarole (for its effects) but he was taught at Oxford to like Sullivan. He read the poems of John Davidson and the philosophy of Georges Sorel. In smoking, eating and drinking he did all that might be expected of him, and he could play rugger amazingly well when he was not too lazy to turn out.

The trinity talked to each other all day and all night, and there were soon very few problems of the universe which had not been satisfactorily settled.



The need for a new point of view became apparent.

"Let's have that fellow Chard in," suggested Martin.

"Coffee in my rooms?" said Lawrence.

"Right-o! To-morrow night, if he'll come."

"Oh, he'll come," said Rendell. "He's rather sick of life. Isolated, you know. He only talks to Davenant."

"Shall we have Davenant too?" suggested Martin.

"The ass with the ties?" said Lawrence; "and the cloak! Oh, not him. Oscar Wilde is a bit played out by now."

"He's no fool," said Rendell. "I had a long conversation with him about Pointillism. He knows some of the Camden Town school."

"Post-Impressionism is less rot than most art," Lawrence growled, "so have him in."

Thus the Push was formed.

Chard was the son of a political K.C. and patently marked out for the acquisition of similar honours in the shortest possible space of time: for he believed firmly in the Liberal Party and himself, a quite irresistible combination in these democratic days. He held no opinion on religion or art, because they were not concerned with his career except in so far as an open declaration of atheism was unwise.

Davenant looked sublimely down on politics. Art was his sphere. Having been appropriately named Aubrey, he had undertaken from an early age to know

all about Beauty. He had learned the names of all the unknown painters and could make great play with them : how much taste or feeling he really possessed no one ever discovered, for he was one of those disconcerting people who mingle acute with ridiculous judgments. At times he affected a vague interest in the Catholic faith and had been known to attend Mass. Concerning the love of women he was at once mysterious and supercilious. He laid claim to a vast knowledge of the sex, and by reason of a Continental year spent since leaving school his boast of Experience demanded some respect. In England, however, he never spoke to women. One night Lawrence, being tolerably drunk, told him he was afraid of women. Whereupon Davenant said he hated rosebuds and liked his flowers faded. Lawrence called him 'an unnachral beas', and made a long speech about purity, in the middle of which he upset his beer and swore most filthily.

Davenant's evening cloak, wrought of a dark but flashing blue, caused its owner more trouble than joy. Lawrence stole it one Saturday night and, clad in it, went roaming through the town, to the great joy of the Oxford maidens who like that kind of joke. He made great play with it in the cinema and ultimately left it in *The Grapes*. When Davenant called for it on the next day it had vanished, and he was not sorry. The cloak had been an embarrassment, nor had he even really cared for it.

But they didn't mind his posing so long as he avowedly-posed. He was, after all, amusing, and at bottom he had a great fund of human kindness. Martin firmly believed that if he had to ask a friend for help or advice he would rather have appealed to Davenant, the apparently supercilious, than to Rendell, the faithful feminist Fabian.

It must not be supposed that the Push became a Push in a day. They only worked up to friendship by rather heavy conversations. They would begin on politics or literature, talking at first with reticence and slight suspicion, but soon their relative isolation brought them closer together and made way for clearer statements and more liberal confessions about sex and religion. It was astonishing how soon after the final breaking of ice they established complete intimacy. Davenant, who had æsthetic friends in other colleges, was least merged in the joint personality of the Push. But all wise men need an audience, and Davenant was not going to desert them while there were still points on which he could gain a hearing.

On several matters they were in complete agreement. They were all 'damned if they were going to row.' The secretary of the Boat Club turned out to be the Rhodes scholar, Theo. K. Snutch, whose rooms Martin had occupied during the scholarship exam. He pointed out gently that the tradition of the 'cahlege' laid down that all freshers should be tubbed. Davenant managed

to persuade Snutch that he had a weak heart and Snutch, taking stock of Davenant, prudently forbore to demand a doctor's certificate. Chard magnificently refused to go near the river and was henceforward ignored by the college athletes : but he did not mind, for none of them had votes at the Union.

"The thing for us," suggested Lawrence to Martin and Rendell, "is that what-you-may-call-'em strike. Grêve perlé or something or other. Stay in and rot the show. Catch a crab every other minute."

"How does one catch a crab ?" asked Rendell, but no one could tell him.

Like most of Lawrence's intentions (he was rich in schemes), the idea was never put into practice. What eventually occurred was the appearance of the rugger secretary demanding the assistance of Lawrence 'just to stiffen up his pack' and the speedy release of Martin and Rendell owing to their dismal inefficiency. Snutch was entirely charming and Martin, who had feared a terrific, blustering coach, was agreeably surprised at the experience.

Another point of agreement with the Push was the essential loathliness of Hearties. King's had rather more than its fair share of Hearties and the freshers seemed likely to keep up the supply. All Hearties were religious, but all the religious were not Hearties. The Hearties always shouted at one another in the quad, and banged each other on

the back. They always called each other Tom and Bill, and when they were not back-banging, they were making arrangements for mission work. They did much solid work for the college athletics, took seconds and thirds in history, and afterwards became school-masters and parsons and went to Switzerland in the winter.

Rendell, who had a passion for classification, insisted on distinguishing between neo-cardiacs and palæo-cardiacs. "Neo-cardiacs," he said, "are more spiritual and more dangerous. They don't shout like the whole-hoggers, but their eyes glitter more and they're keener about the new type of bishop. Look at Steel-Brockley. He's a scholar and a 'mind' and can't swallow all the rot of the old school, but he's more sinister really."

"I suppose that Hodges is the ideal palæo-cardiac," said Martin.

"Yes, Hodges, the great ass."

"Of course he's out to set up a kingdom of heaven upon earth," said Lawrence. "And can't you imagine his idea of it? It'll be stiff with people like himself, all blustering round and organising things. Football, Rich *v.* Poor. Of course there will still be rich and poor, for our Hodges is a Tory, but there'll be a spirit of fellowship oozing everywhere."

"'Running things' is all these chaps really care about," said Davenant, intervening. "I don't believe they care a straw about their summer camps

and boys' brigades as far as the boys go. They like to be in charge of clubs and canteens and order kids about and tell them what a good thing discipline is and how wicked Trades Unions are."

"Those are the neos," added Rendell quickly. "The old ones like to rag about, and there's something to be said for that. Hodges likes ragging. Of course he is an ass, but he's not a dangerous ass. On the whole, we may call him a dear old thing and let him go on shouting. But the bad men are Steel-Brockley's gang. They all suffer from bossing fever and can't live unless they're running something. And they're desperately fair-minded and don't believe in party, which simply means that they are Tory agents, and tell the boys what a sin it is to be discontented with five or six bob for a seventy-hour week."

"And they're dragging in the freshers," said Lawrence. "Ought to be strangled."

So in private they settled the business of the Hearties. But in public, partly because they were freshers and partly because they had not the courage of their convictions, they found themselves being quite polite to these good young men.

Religion had an ever-living appeal for the Push, because it is one of the few subjects about which argument is as fascinating as it is futile. Chard, it is true, couldn't be bothered with metaphysics: he was a history scholar, and his line was a first in history and

then the Bar. But the discussions were never metaphysical in the technical sense and it amused him to listen and sum up with an epigram. Davenant used to murmur that he thought Christ rather a beautiful figure and that the Church had saved Art in the Middle Ages, but he did not receive much attention. It became more and more the custom to regard Davenant as a picturesque background to conversations, except when artistic matters were under discussion. Then he held the floor, or rather he stood gracefully before the fire and spoke slowly between puffs of smoke.

They met most often in Lawrence's rooms, which were large and conveniently situated on the ground floor. He had added to the dilapidated furniture some new cushions and a really good arm-chair, and, having no money, he started a colossal bill at Blackwell's, so that his shelves were soon piled with books which he rarely read. But he was not the man to care deeply for his rooms, as did Davenant, who believed in Gordon Craig and used to mess about in the afternoons, putting the light in remote corners or hanging up curtains of a new colour. It was well that Lawrence cared little for his rooms, as he became invariably drunk on Saturday nights, and when drunk he was violent. He would lie on the floor kicking and declaiming Limericks until someone put him to bed: even then he was known to rise again and break things.

Lawrence swilling beer in his rooms was a great

spectacle. Usually blasphemous and always obscene, he did everything on such a generous scale and with such a childish innocence and honesty that he was always attractive and rarely repelled even one so fastidious as Davenant.

It was on Sunday nights that the Push talked about religion. Lawrence would pull out the sofa and build up a roaring fire : then with the aid of pipes and much swallowing of beer they would set about it. Every Sunday Rendell was pilloried, but the victim never objected and always returned to the combat. The great point about religious discussion is that you can never be beaten. They treated either with the truth of Christianity or the value of its practical results. In the latter case Lawrence would boom about bishops with fifteen thousand a year, and Martin would demonstrate with irrefutable logic that religion had always resisted freedom and education and had made the world the hole it is. As they both talked interminably Rendell had little opportunity of answering.

One night Lawrence rushed into his rooms shortly after dinner and found the Push assembled.

"My god !" he said, plunging into the sofa.

"I thought you hadn't one," said Chard.

"Don't be obvious. I'm angry, my god, I'm angry."

He was asked to explain.

"Steel-Brockley asked me to go to coffee in his rooms



and when I got there I found he had provided a lecturer gassing about the value of faith for us."

"Well," said Davenant, "that was very considerate of our Brockley."

"Exactly. But he might have warned me. It didn't matter. I couldn't stick it long."

"I should think not. It's barely a half-an-hour since dinner now."

"What happened?" asked Martin.

"It was like this," began Lawrence. "Brockley produced a battered chap from the colonies, all pock-marks and freckles, you know the type. Of course he began, as they always do, by saying that he had seen men die in all parts of the world and they all died the better for their faith. None of them seemed to live, or else he had a morbid mind and likes death. I don't know. Anyhow he had the cheek to say that King's spiritual life wasn't as strong as it had been. He was deeply concerned about us. He whined about us. He thought we were all going to the devil because the scholars have taken to cutting chapel. Just imagine a little tick like that coming here to tell us, whom he doesn't know, that we're not so soulful as the clean young men out West. Thank god we're not. I gave him about ten minutes and cleared out."

There was a murmur of delight.

"I suppose no one heard you leave the room," said

Martin, but Lawrence never rose to jests about his bulk and gait.

"And there were all Brockley's gang," he went on, "sitting with all the light of grace in their eyes. And when the pock-marked chap got busy in the impressive line you could fairly hear them thinking, 'God's in His Heaven, all's right with the world.'"

"And a very good thought," said Rendell.

Lawrence would always rise to the religious bait.

"Just the kind of thought that you would expect from a well-fed Liberal poet."

Lawrence opened violently a bottle of Munich beer and drained the contents. Then he gave a vast sigh of relief, pulled out his pipe and stood expansively before the fire, exposing, unconsciously, a large gap of shirt between his waistcoat and the grey flannel trousers whose sole support lay in their tightness.

"It isn't God that matters," he declared. "It's the Godites. They're worse than ever."

"They've at least begun to move with the times."

"Exactly," said Martin, coming in as usual to assist Lawrence. "They swallow everything new and say they meant it all the time. I don't mind good old burn-the-devil bigots, but this up-to-date Interpreting and Restatement and Revaluation and Earnest Wash, it makes me sick. Why can't they give up their tribal deity and do something sensible?"

"You're so beastly crude," answered Rendell. "Oxford isn't exactly a brainless place, and it's full of religion."

"It's full of a washed-out, watery, emasculate ghost of a faith," said Martin. "They daren't say what they really do mean for fear of giving the show away. So they talk about Evolution and the Unknowable and 'may be something in it.'"

"The religion of the Oxford don," said Chard magnificently from his corner, "is the sickly bastard of nervousness and inertia."

"I'll give you a quid to say that at the Union," said Martin. But Chard valued his career at more than a sovereign.

"Aren't you men a little out of date?" interrupted Davenant. "Chivvyng priests and kings was about 1870, wasn't it?"

"Exactly," Rendell cried in triumph. "You've done for priests and kings. Nobody believes in them any more. They've collapsed, and by collapsing become infinitely stronger. Bradlaugh's brigade never foresaw that, when you take away nominal power, you begin to create real power. The weakest side always wins in the end."

"Don't talk Chestertonian drivel," growled Lawrence. "Nobody believes it."

"It's quite true. Religion is stronger than ever just because it's weaker."

"The last flicker," said Martin.

Then the conversation, having reached an impasse, turned of necessity and they were off once more upon matters episcopal.

"I don't see why a bishop should get thousands a year while the curates are half starved," said Lawrence.

"They don't spend it on themselves," retorted Rendell.

"Only on palaces and motors and flummery. No, my boy, it's all bunkum. Look at the fortunes they leave." Lawrence had collected a list of episcopal fortunes which he read with glee upon every possible occasion. It was an excellent array of figures, starting well up in the hundred thousands.

"Oh, chuck it," said Rendell. "We've heard all this before."

But Lawrence read irrepressibly on.

"What about your needle's eye now?" he roared.

"Oh, don't be a child," said Rendell.

"That's all you ever say. Childish! You with your Athanasian Creed and incense and swindling priests. Ever been to Notre Dame and seen the advertisements? Forty days' purgatory remitted in return for so many prayers! And you call me childish!" Lawrence had a fine flow of metaphors and expletives. He had been known to continue one sentence for ten minutes, his oratorical method being to substitute copulas for full stops. He began jerkily, it is true. But once the

lumbering coach was set moving nothing could withstand its impetus.

Rendell yielded and began to discuss with Davenant the personality of Christ. Lawrence continued roaring at no one in particular. At last he sat heavily down in his arm-chair, so heavily that one of its legs gave way. He tore off the broken member and brandished it wildly, as a symbol of his attitude to all things episcopal.

As usual it was Chard who closed the discussion.

"Davenant's faith," he said, "makes me think of a mendicant professor of æsthetics and Rendell's of the first secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners (Nazareth branch). I move the question be put."

His advice was taken.

"Beer," said Lawrence. "My god, more beer."

And so the evenings would begin.

### III

INCREDIBLY the Push were blind to their amazing superficiality. Even had they suffered from an inclination to be serious, life came so easily and so rapidly that it would have been impossible to do anything but play with it. So they trifled with wisdom and trifled rightly. For when a man is only nineteen and has enough to eat and drink, and more than enough to read and say, it were a crime to stop in thought and laboriously dam the pleasant shallows of an easy-going stream. Alike in the winter nights by Lawrence's fire or by the lingering twilights of early summer when they threaded a maze of back-waters or lay in the cool fastness of the college garden listening to the wind in the great elms or the tinkle of a distant piano, they built great castles of argument, flimsy and fantastic piles untouched by reality and doomed to fade away at the coming of Experience. They talked of great things and small, of God and Woman and sometimes of Man, of futures and careers, of the dons, of the college, of the varsity teams, of books and plays and poets, of the coldness of the pretty girl in this shop and of the wantonness of the plain girl in that.

They lived with an excellent method. In the

mornings they lay in bed, thought about breakfast, ate breakfast, and read the papers. In the junior common-room there were all the dailies and on Wednesdays there were *Punch*, *The Tatler*, *The Sketch*, and *The Bystander*, on Saturdays the weekly reviews. They were catholic in the reading, but, if the supply happened to give out, they could always consider what to do in the afternoon. By that time it was one o'clock and they lunched frugally and together. In the afternoon they took their various amusements. Perhaps Lawrence and Martin played rugger, while Chard and Davenant strolled round Addison Walk. Rendell insisted on playing hockey, insisted in the face of opposition.

"You can't play hockey," said Martin. "It's no game for a gentleman."

"It's quite a good game," Rendell apologised.

"It may be all right for internationals who dart about and toss the ball in the air and catch it on the end of their sticks, but it's no game for incapables like you."

"I'm in the team anyhow. And you, by the way, are winning renown as the worst wing three-quarter in Oxford."

"That is probably true," Martin admitted. "But it doesn't destroy my contention that hockey is a scrappy, uncomfortable business and only good enough for men who can't get into any other teams."

"You're a stark old reactionary," retorted Rendell. "Hockey is the game of the future. There'll be a 'full Blue' for it in a year or two. And don't make the obvious remark."

Martin didn't. But he continued to jeer when Rendell went off in the rain and came back with bruised shins and perhaps a black eye. This only encouraged Rendell to take the game very seriously, to turn out always, and to run like a hare down his wing, whereas Martin and Lawrence treated this rugger team with disdain and only played when it pleased them. The secretary, being hard up for players, could not drop them altogether, for even Martin was better than his substitute. In the summer Rendell played cricket as seriously as he had played his hockey, so that he just gained a place in the college eleven. Martin played sometimes for the tennis six and the other three fled, when it was warm enough and at first when it was not—for such is the way of freshers—to navigate the Cherwell in the communal punt.

In the evenings they dined out as often as their college would let them and went to meetings of clubs or, on the rare occasions when there was a play worth seeing, to the theatre. Work they neglected, thoroughly and with a good heart. Chard and Davenant, who were to take modern history, both failed in Pass Mods in March, but passed in the summer after a fortnight's reading. The other three had resolved that Honour



Mods could easily be squared in a long vac and two terms: they did not realise that a year of idleness (or nearly two years, for none of them had worked since gaining their scholarships) creates a habit of mind which cannot easily be shaken off. Two stiff terms are easier to contemplate than to achieve. Martin, indeed, had his uncle's blessing, for John Berrisford had told him that the first year was meant to broaden one's point of view: it struck him as a joyous process, this broadening of one's point of view.

His tutor, Reggie Petworth, he did not like. Petworth turned out to be a "neo-cardiac" of the first water: even then he hadn't the decency to be whole-hearted in his heartiness and wavered between complete allegiance with Hodges and the college 'right' and a feeble attempt to conciliate the 'left' as represented by Lawrence and Martin. Petworth had come from Balliol with the Hertford, the Ireland, and a Philosophy of Fun. It was Fun to write jolly compositions and Fun to set proses out of George Meredith which bore no relation to classical thought or idiom and couldn't conceivably be translated into reasonable Latin or Greek. It was Fun to be a High Churchman, Fun to talk about priests and masses, Fun to date your letters by feasts of the Church, Fun to be a Liberal and believe in the people. Fun to have bad cigarettes sent from a remote Oriental town because its monarch was a Balliol man, Fun to collect things without

sense or purpose, Fun, in fact, to pretend to be a child.

"One doesn't mind Davenant pretending to be decadent now and then," said Martin to Lawrence, "because decadence always depends on posing for its real point. A man isn't a decadent unless he knows he's a decadent and plays up to it. But childhood is rather different, and I don't see why blighters like Reggie should try and ape it."

"Just the Balliol touch," said Lawrence.

Martin was supposed to show up two compositions a week to Reggie Petworth and to do occasional translation papers. He attended with some regularity to make up for his complete absence from lectures. Petworth exhorted him mildly to make more strenuous efforts and told him what Fun Demosthenes could be if one read the private speeches, about mining rights and water-courses and assaults. Whereupon Martin was coldly polite and retired to renew his conversations about the world at large, while Petworth would find a 'jolly' man and walk out to eat lunch at Beckley, saying 'What Fun!' if he saw a pig with pleasant markings.

To Martin, as he lazily reclined one September morning in the black woods behind The Steading, the past was a vision of undimmed radiance. Oxford had threatened but it had not fulfilled: rather it had grudged him nothing of its plenty. It had given him friends

(miraculously the Push had not quarrelled) and views and a year of fine living. He knew now how tainted by the poison of exams had been his first impressions of that grey and gracious city, he knew that it was not just a Midland town with a liability to fogs and floods. Also he knew that his uncle had been wrong when he said that the place didn't matter and only the institution counted. For he had even learned to love the lambent tongues of mist that crept stealthily from the river to the walls of Corpus and Merton and drifted over roofs and towers to the noise and splendour of the High. The myriad lights of rooms piled on rooms flashing out into a blue dusk of winter, the reds and greys of Holywell, the clatter of the Corn and the bells that told unfailingly the hours of the night were now in his memory the blended symbols of a growing intimacy. He had found out Cumnor Hurst and Besselsleigh, and the sweep of the downs clear-cut against the sky, and the old towns to the West, Burford and Fairford and all the Chippings of the Wolds. But clearest of all in his memory were the canoe voyages made by Rendell and Lawrence and himself at the close of the summer term. Then, while a horde of wealthy trippers came to Oxford to dance and flirt and hold sumptuous revel, they pierced every dim recess of the upper river and probed the secrets of the Evenlode. They had bathed in the morning and in the afternoon and again by moonlight, running in wild nakedness

over strewn hay to recover warmth. At Bablock Hythe they had eaten cold ducks and drunk cider in gallons: they had lain for hours on the Long Leas gazing into an infinite dome of stars and waiting for the idle nightingale. And Lawrence had nearly murdered Rendell for quoting Matthew Arnold.

Martin was eager to be back, despite the prospect of two stiff terms. And when he was back once more in Oxford, no longer the leaf-clad city of pleasant waters but grey and dripping with the autumn mists, he found that both he himself and his friends had far too much to say. They were all in new and more desirable rooms and Martin was free from the domination of Galer. He had chosen to dwell high up in the back quad, where the windows were large and the rooms airy, and lately he had revised his pictures. This term he purchased some quaintly luminous and misty landscapes which were the fruit either of startling genius or blank incompetence. As to which was the case there was great argument. Rendell, being senior scholar of his year, had been able to claim the famous rooms of the college, oak-panelled and majestically dark. For Art he relied upon Rembrandt and Dürer: but then Rendell never risked anything.

Undoubtedly they had all a great deal to recount, for sixteen weeks of vacation could hardly fail to bring new friends and new experience, new books and new ideas. And the Push knew that there is no satis-

faction in mere discovery : it is the telling of a tale that makes for pleasure. So night after night Martin neglected to settle down after dinner, began to tell tales, and concluded, somewhere about twelve, that it was too late to begin now. Then they would play a rubber of sixpenny auction just to make them sleepy and, playing till three or four, would so succeed in their ambition that they could not breakfast till eleven. Only Rendell refused to be tempted and went dutifully to his books.

Before long Martin quarrelled with Reggie Petworth, sulked foolishly, despaired of the term, and began to rely on the winter vacation and the subsequent six weeks of term to grapple with the problem of Mods. He spent a miserable Christmas at The Steading and came to the conclusion on New Year's Eve that he had forgotten nearly every word of Greek and Latin that he had ever known. He did not look forward to the term, and on January the fifteenth he went to Oxford as a lamb to the slaughter.

It was a term of infinite depression. The early months of the year, everywhere unkind, are singularly uncharitable to Oxford: the glamour of autumn had departed and winter has no majesty in muddy streets. The days were yellow with a sticky warmth that brought exhaustion and despair. Martin, passing from book to book, felt always, at whatever time of day, as though he had eaten too much lunch and

would die if he didn't soon have tea : it was that kind of weather. He gave up football because it made him sleep after tea : and then, being without exercise or diversion, yawned all morning and read garbage after lunch. Rendell had his work well in hand and was, men said, sure to get a first. Lawrence had manfully abandoned hope and sought consolation in beer and bridge. Martin, foolishly but characteristically, took the middle path. He had neither the energy to work nor the courage to be idle, but sat mournfully with his books, gazing blankly at the pages and wondering why it was all so new to him. Then he would consult recent papers, and his heart would sink yet lower as he realised his amazing ignorance.

As the weeks slipped away he took to learning up lists of hard words and legal technicalities. He became a master of the Virgilian vegetable and the Demosthenic demurrer, and though he knew the Latin for burrs and calthrops and succory and bogwort, he would have been quite incapable of distinguishing those herbs from one another. Thus do we study the poets and orators. But it was distressing work.

And then he became aware of Pink Roses. He noticed her because of her ubiquity and partly, perhaps, because she was always alone : he noticed her in the Broad, in the High, at a football match in the parks, once in the cinema. She was not beautiful, not even pretty : otherwise she need scarcely have remained

alone in a community so rapacious. Usually she wore a coat and skirt of dark blue and a little black hat with pink roses. Beneath her hat Martin had observed light fluffy hair done witchingly about her ears and he had been able to notice that she had a pleasing smile and the tiniest of dimples. But her features, too heavy to be piquant, were not strong enough to be striking.

He pointed her out one day to Lawrence and demanded his opinion.

"Oh, that's your Pink Roses," he said critically. "Pretty poor stuff."

"She may be all right," answered Martin meekly.

"She walks all right, but she has got a face like a milk pudding."

Martin did not attempt to argue against this higher criticism. Lawrence, he thought, was an old dear but he certainly lacked perception. There *was* something about Pink Roses.

And then one evening, when he was turning into a main street, he walked right into her. He smiled vaguely and apologised, but she had hurried past him and did not hear. He turned and watched her. She stopped outside the cinema and studied the programme : eventually she went in. Martin had meant to do an hour's work before dinner and began walking back to college. Soon he stopped again and stood vaguely on the pavement, gazing at the passing crowd. At last resolvedly he resumed his journey to the college and

the poets. Five minutes later he was passing a shilling through the grille of the cinema ticket office. It seemed an age before a film ended and the light went up. Then he saw the Pink Roses flowering alone in the sixpenny seats. As soon as the pictures began he would go in her direction. But when the time came he felt self-conscious and afraid. 'Ridiculous ass,' he said to himself. "You desert Lucretius for Pink Roses and now you don't even gather the rose-buds." And then again: 'Who is the silly girl—after all? Here am I, a scholar of a college, deserting Lucretius for that funny little person! It's too childish.' So he rose to go out and walked instead to the sixpenny seats.

The girl looked round to see who was coming next to her.

"Hullo!" whispered Martin as though surprised. "Didn't I nearly knock you over in the street just now?"

"Someone ran into me," she answered. "I didn't notice who it was."

"I think it was me. I'm so sorry."

"Oh, it didn't matter, thank you."

She said it very nicely and Martin was encouraged to go on. It was rather difficult and he wished he was fortified by a sound dinner.

"You come here a good lot?" he said at last.

"Yes. Nearly every time the pictures change."



"Don't you get bored?"

"It's better than doing nothing."

"But the pictures are so silly as a rule."

"Oh, I like the pictures. 'Sixty Years a Queen'—that was lovely. The girl that did Queen Victoria was just sweet."

To his own surprise Martin did not object to her taste: he would have loathed any other admirer of "Sixty Years a Queen."

"Do you know many people here?" he asked.

"I know some girls I was at school with."

"No men?"

"Not many. I know Mr Carter; Brasenose, isn't he? Do you know him?"

"Only by sight. He's going to be chucked out of the varsity boat."

"Is he? I'm so sorry. He's awfully nice."

"Do you know him well?"

"Only a little. I met him in here. He asked me to have tea in his rooms in Beaumont Street, but of course I couldn't."

So she had ideas about propriety. There was a silence.

"Do you always live in Oxford?" asked Martin.

"We live out at Botley."

"Pretty deadly spot, isn't it?"

"Yes, it's something awful. I want to go to London only my family won't let me go into business. I'm awfully bored."

"So am I."

"Why are you bored?"

"I've got an exam coming on."

"Oh, you poor thing! I could never do exams. I think they're horrid. I do hope you'll get on all right!"

"Thanks very much!" It pleased Martin to have her sympathy.

They chattered on. Her name was May Williams and she seemed to be very, very tired of Botley and her own company. Before Martin went away to dinner he asked her to meet him at the same time the next evening.

"It's Wednesday," he said. "So you'll get your new pictures. I think it's nicer at this time: there's such a crush in here after dinner."

May agreed with evident pleasure and Martin went back to dinner rejoicing in his courage and his first steps to adventure. He had been right: there was something about Pink Roses, indefinable perhaps, but plainly something. She wasn't just one of the Oxford girls.

So they met again and on Saturday night they drove out in a taxi to Abingdon and dined in rather squalid pomp. Henceforward they saw much of one another and had more drives and dinners and were happy: for both had won a release.

They did not at all know what they wanted, but

both knew quite plainly from what they wanted to escape. Martin wanted to throw off for a few hours the burden of his work, which was neither mere routine, like copying addresses, nor definite creation, like the making of a poem or a good mashie shot. This minute preparation of books and this learning by rote of variant readings and emendations seemed so appalling just because they defied both a mechanical application and a vivid interest. And May wanted to escape from the frigid respectability of a red-brick villa at Botley, where she lived with her father, a retired Oxford tradesman: she wanted to escape from an existence which contained nothing but meals, a bicycle, *The Daily Mirror*, and walks with the girl next door. So she invented an old school friend who had jolly evenings in Walton Street. Her father had the virtue of credulity and allowed her to go her own way, and Martin's.

So much they knew and nothing more. Martin never discovered whether he actually felt any enthusiasm for May as a real person abstracted from Mods and his own despair and the black mass of circumstance: he didn't think about it, but just took her as she was. There were times when she amused him and gave him pleasure, and times when he thought that the satisfaction of her kisses was as nothing to the boredom of her conversation. Yet, because he was young and simple and far more conscientious than

he would have cared to admit to the advanced young men of the Push, he was not prepared to confess to himself that she was just an amusement. The Martin who talked so airily in Lawrence's rooms about women and the world was an innocent impostor : as a matter of fact the Push, also conscious and a little ashamed of their own excessive virtue, were not taken in by his magniloquence. May was equally ignorant about her own attitude and intentions. She was not at all a fast or desperate young woman : an impartial critic might even have noticed in her a leaden morality. But her conscience did not forbid the unaccustomed thrill of a lover's attendance and the subsequent lie of convenience. No one had ever encouraged her to think things out or to formulate her purposes. Consequently she drifted placidly, and if conscience whispered or Martin suggested another evening's pleasure, it was too much trouble to listen to the one or refuse the other.

Mods were to begin on a Thursday. On the preceding Saturday Martin was going down to the Berrisfords to seek fresh air and to forget the existence of Demosthenes. He had wanted to stay and cram to the end, but ultimately he had yielded to Petworth's advice and decided to go. At eleven o'clock on the Friday night he was wandering back alone through Osney. He had walked with May along the Eynsham Road : it had been a perfect night with the moon

hanging over Wytham Woods like a silver slit in a cloth of blackest fabric. But May didn't bother about the moon, and they had gone to a deserted barn where they had met before, a good enough place for lovers in the mood but otherwise draughty and forlorn. They had not quarrelled: neither had alluded to the possibility of such a thing. But Martin had thought May dull and May had thought Martin cold. The evening had not been a success, and the fact that it had not been a confessed failure made it all the worse, for Martin had arranged to see her again on Wednesday night before his exam.

Now, as he tramped slowly home, he fell into a great anger and despair. That night at least he might have devoted to learning the long lists of words which he had so laboriously compiled. But he hadn't: he had dallied in an outhouse with a girl who didn't think, didn't know, didn't care, a girl whose only attraction lay in her wistful eyes and an engaging atmosphere of loneliness. To have to philander in back roads and crumbling sheds—how revolting it all was when he looked at it in cold blood. To have to—well, perhaps he hadn't to, but life, with its misery of Mods, wasn't much fun if he didn't. This was the only escape. Martin wanted to meet women openly, if he had to meet them, and to face things clearly and honestly. But he couldn't do so because of morality, official morality with its peeping proctors and furtive pettiness.

How Lawrence and he had thrashed it all out! It seemed that men should have honourable and reasonable relations with women, and yet, because of decency, it came to this. Wherever man met woman, there also must be mean slinking and shame-faced meeting, taxis and back lanes and a sordid round of evasion. Earlier in the term the sheer joy of release had blinded him to the squalor of it. Now, when enchantment had been staled by habit, his fastidiousness returned. It wasn't only that Pink Roses were beginning to fade: he was beginning to realise that pleasure demands its pleasance and Pink Roses an adequate rose-bed.

And then came four days of Devonshire, with clear winds from the sea such as never breathed strength and spirit into Oxford's mellow torpor: four days too of The Steading's restful beauty, of real hills and whispering coverts. And there were two days of golf on a distant course, a season of great hitting with driver and brassie, fierce efforts to make "fours" of fives, with rare successes and frequent disaster. In the evenings John Berrisford was more wonderful than ever.

Nor was fresh company wanting. Margaret had a friend staying with her, a Miss Freda Neilson. At first Martin thought her insignificant, but he soon saw that her insignificance was intensely significant. She wasn't just a small and timid person with nothing to be said for or against her. In her quick-glancing eyes of

deepest brown lurked courage and speculation, and there was a charming ease about her clothes and the swift movements of her body. She certainly was not a frowsy intellectual, and the fact that Margaret had brought her down for inspection was a guarantee that she wasn't a stupid little thing.

Martin had talked a little to her on Saturday night : after breakfast on Sunday he noticed her on a seat in the garden enjoying the strong sunshine. He went towards her and looked over her shoulder. She was reading one of Mr Berrisford's more private French works. Careless of Margaret to leave it about !

"On Sunday, too !" said Martin.

"Just to counteract the very English breakfast," she laughed. "I don't think I ever ate so much in my life since I came here."

"My uncle's sound about breakfast. Those were true sausages."

"I suppose so. I don't think I'm very good at sausages. I'm afraid I hanker after rolls and fruit and things."

"Then you're all wrong. You've no case at all."

"And who gave you permission to lay down the law about taste ?"

"My own common-sense. How can two people talk unless someone starts by dogmatising ? Supposing I started off, 'Sausages may possibly, if they are good ones and of sound pork richly fried, seem nice to some

people, the world being as it is,' . . . we wouldn't get far, would we ? ”

“ And who said I wanted conversation ? ”

“ I ventured to deduce it from the fact that you looked round when you thought I wasn't looking.”

“ I never did.”

“ Didn't you ? Then I made a bad shot. I'm sorry ! ”

Martin wasn't very happy about this rather heavy beginning. The conversation was floundering hopelessly. Freda, seeing this, took him firmly in hand.

“ Well,” she said, closing the sinister work of decadence, “ as you've come, you'd better stay and enjoy the sunshine and take an interest in me.”

“ Will you take one in me ? ”

“ Oh yes ! Fair play. Don't let's talk stilted rubbish any more : it's such an effort. Now then, I'll begin. What about Oxford and Mods ? ”

So he told her the weary tale. She was sympathetic in a rather challenging, offensive way, which he enjoyed.

“ And now you ? ” he said.

“ Oh, I'm just an office girl. I ought to read *The Mirror* and *The London Mail*, but I don't. You know Margaret was doing some work for the Women's Trade Union Movement : that's how she ran into me. I do the typing in the office where she works. We had a rush of work owing to the strikes in Lancashire and my silly health collapsed. She brought me down



here. The Berrisfords have been awfully good to me."

"Do you like being in the office?" asked Martin.

"It might be worse, because the letters I have to type are sometimes about something mildly interesting. Just fancy having to do business letters all day. But the society is so short of funds that they work me hard and don't overpay me."

"I always knew that sweating began with the charity-mongers. But I thought your people might be a bit better."

"I suppose I oughtn't to grumble. Shouldn't I pay a small sacrifice to the great cause of Efficiency?"

"I hate Collectivism. I mean the Efficiency type."

"So young, my lord, and a Syndicalist?"

"In parts. Anyhow, they might treat you better." Martin spoke with conviction.

"It's nice of you to be worried, but you needn't. I used to be a school-ma'am and teach English literature to girls with pigtails and secret societies to giggle about. Can't you imagine me? We always did *As You Like It* or *The Tempest*. That was just hell. I'd much sooner pinch and scrape in London than live in a school with bells and prayers and the younger members of my own sex. It was quite a good post and everyone said I ought to have stayed on. But I just couldn't. So now I have only myself to blame if I'm unhappy."

"I think it was very plucky of you," was all Martin could think of.

"Oh, I'm safe enough. I don't starve, you know. But there's not much over for books."

"It must be rotten!"

There was a silence.

"Do the Berrisfords go to church?" Freda asked suddenly. "I only came on Tuesday."

"No, rather not."

"Thank God!"

"Then you aren't one of the faithful?"

"No. Taking the girls to church had a bad effect on my temper. Besides, after all——"

"Well?"

"I'm keen on philosophy. Are you?"

"I'm going to be when I begin Greats."

"Don't you like it now?"

"In a crude sort of way. We're always talking about God at Oxford."

"That must be splendid. I have to do it with myself, but I don't get any further."

"Than what?"

"Than a tremendous conviction that there can't be one."

"There isn't."

"You've settled it?"

"Long ago."

"I suppose," said Freda, "that people laugh at you,

like they do at me. I don't care. Margaret talks about the Unknowable and says I'm presumptuous. I hate the Unknowable : it seems so cowardly, somehow."

"You're quite right," decided Martin. "The Unknowable is the limit."

"But we mustn't agree about everything," Freda put in : "otherwise it will be frightfully dull."

"Well, let's talk about Art," he suggested. "We're bound to quarrel then."

And they did. It was astonishing how soon lunch-time arrived.

Later on they talked about everything in the world. Martin knew that he had found what he wanted, a woman with an undergraduate's mind. In a way it was like talking to one of the Push, but yet there was all the difference in the world. Why there should be that difference he couldn't tell. But there it undeniably was. To meet men who could argue was good : to meet a woman who said the same sort of things was more than good. Freda walked with him on the moor on Tuesday, and he had the chance of helping her over bogs and chasms. On that evening she accepted a billiard lesson at his hands. Of these opportunities he made the most. May Williams had at least had an educational value.

These four days were magically sundered from the rest of life : he had succeeded, to his own great surprise,

in forgetting Oxford altogether. But the day of reckoning was at hand, and when Martin settled down in the train on Wednesday he fell at once from the heights to the depths. To begin with, he was going back to Mods. Before the tumult of his mind flashed visions of texts marked with blue lines, texts which he had omitted to look up. He wondered whether he really knew about Ulysses' abominable boat and whether he remembered which words in the Greek meant dowels and trenails. And he was going back to Pink Roses. The squalor of it! To-night he was to meet her and slink away somewhere. He couldn't, he simply couldn't! He had learned, rather he thought he had learned, what a conversation with a woman ought to be. There could be no more whisperings with May. On reaching Oxford Martin sent a telegram: he was unavoidably prevented from seeing her. He felt that he ought to be angry with himself because it didn't hurt him to treat her like this: but his conscience failed to rise to the situation. Quite plainly he had done with May.

Mods in the actual presence afforded him eight days of consummate torture. It was all right for Rendell, who knew his work thoroughly, and Lawrence, who didn't know it at all. They could view their papers without concern, the one scribbling diligently, the other yawning complacently, guessing words, and tossing up with a penny when there seemed to be two

equally probable meanings to a passage for construe. But for Martin every prepared paper was a thing of reminiscence and suggestion. He knew just enough to appreciate his own ignorance : as he stared at the passages on which he had to comment he recognised them with maddening vagueness as a man who cannot put a name to a face he knows. Hauntingly they seemed to cry out at him : " You saw me last January, but you don't know what the devil I'm about." While Rendell used his knowledge and Lawrence his imagination, Martin sweated and racked his memory and got everything half right. His nerve went and he began, he thought, to make a mess of his composition. Afterwards he was left with a blur of sensations and images which included a large clock and a smiling invigilator, aching hands and nights of relentless preparation.

When it was all over he hurried down to Devonshire, leaving Lawrence to forty-eight hours of continuous intoxication. Freda would still be there. But, to his fury, he discovered that she had gone to Paris with Margaret. He sulked obviously, and hated the whole world : life and letters had tended to leave his nerves raw and anything stung him. Finally he went to join Rendell and Lawrence in Belgium, and there, with Memling and Bock and conversation, he forgot his woes. The exam results came to them at Rochefort, rich in grottoes, that notable town of the Ardennes. Rendell had taken a first, Martin a second, and

Lawrence a third. Martin had entertained fears of a third and Lawrence of a fourth, so they agreed that things have been worse.

“Anyhow,” said Martin, as they went in search of tea and *gateaux*, “that’s an end of those infernal classics.” Which was both an error on his part—for in Greats, as he later on discovered, one deals mainly with translation—and a commentary on the plain man’s attitude to the poets and orators by the time that he has been taught all about them.

## IV

THE summer term was a joyous interlude. Martin and Lawrence had nothing to do but play tennis or regard the world from a punt, and an early summer encouraged these methods of killing time. Rendell was cajoled by Petworth into entering for the Hertford scholarship, which involved some attention to the Latin language. While Martin read novels Rendell was perusing some of the worst poetry that the world has ever produced, it being the habit of the examiners to select passages from the frigid obscurity of Silver Latin.

"There's your classical education," shouted Lawrence contemptuously. "Silius Italicus and drivel about Etna and its siphons."

Rendell had to admit that, taken as a whole, Latin literature made a poor show.

"There's Lucretius and Catullus," he said.

"They're all right," said Lawrence. "But who else is there? Virgil, the Victorian before his time. The cave scene, so refined and all that. Better than old Arthur from the barge. Virgil the most blatant pirate and lifter of literary goods that ever made a name. Virgil who couldn't even translate the originals right

and showed himself to be a fool as well as a knave. If we're going to have thieves, let's have them competent. Virgil ! Ugh ! ”

Lawrence always spoke like this about Virgil : the subject gave him eloquence, and the others had long ago ceased to argue with him on this theme. To withstand his river of rhetoric was like trying to make a match-box float up-stream.

“ No, my lad,” he continued, “ you are making a distinct fool of yourself by believing Mr Petworth's flattery. Not only is Latin literature rot, but that rot will be more efficiently done by those intolerable creatures from Balliol, who think of nothing else but these pots. You're wasting valuable time, failing to improve your execrable tennis, and demeaning yourself into the bargain. I wouldn't compete with those swine.”

Of course Rendell took no notice and continued to read the more obscure Romans. But Lawrence was right ; he did himself no good.

In June Martin went down to Devonshire. Only his uncle and aunt were at home : Margaret was abroad and Robert was working in chambers in town. Martin had much time for recalling the past and considering the future. He saw now that a day of reckoning was at hand. For two years, with the exception of a few weeks, he had taken life very, very easily, and it was inevitable that he should begin to take it with corresponding seriousness. He would have to settle down :



his second in Mods had been a fluky affair, based rather on previous knowledge than on any real work done at Oxford. "Greats" would depend on genuine reading, and after Greats the Civil—and his livelihood. Probably he would have to go to India: how unthinkable it all was! Martin thought of India as a very hot place, where you either died before you got your pension or sat in clubs drinking whisky and soda with bullet-headed soldiers who didn't know the difference between Chopin and Cézanne, didn't know probably that such people had been. The future became hatefully plain. Either he would fail for the Civil and go to slave dismally at Wren's or else he would pass and go out to Colonels or to death. He wanted none of these things: he wanted books and friends and work in London, just enough work to neglect. It was scarcely possible for him to get a job at home and he hadn't money enough for the Bar. In fact he hadn't a penny, and he knew that his uncle couldn't help him: as it was, Mr Berrisford had been more than generous.

It was a bad prospect. To make matters worse, he set out to read Herodotus. He had been told that Herodotus was the jolliest man on earth (of course by Petworth) and he expected a treat. He found two immense volumes about nothing in particular, which contained a description of the world, occasionally amusing but more often fruitful only of hard words. What it all had to do with the Greek states and why

the father of history had chosen to write almost anything but history, and that in the most muddled way possible, he found it hard to discover. And then he tried the ethics of Aristotle: he penetrated as far as Book V. and then gave way. For two whole days he yawned and swore alternately. There was not even anyone to talk to.

One night he decided to put the case to his uncle. He approached it in a rather tentative way after dinner as they sat smoking.

"Don't you ever get tired of being the country gentleman?" he asked.

"Frequently," said John Berrisford.

"Does it pass off, or what do you do about it?"

"Sometimes I go up to town to a company meeting and sometimes I bravely defy boredom by catching, or failing to catch, trout."

"And it works?"

"Tolerably. But why this anxiety about country life?"

"It just occurred to me."

After a silence, John Berrisford said to Martin:

"You've got a fit of depression and you want to meet men and talk about Art or the good life or women. It's quite right and natural that you should. Where have all your set vanished to?"

"Two or three have gone to Paris."

"Well, go thou and do likewise."

Martin paused. "I'm afraid I can't afford it. I've only got twelve pounds to keep me going till October. And I've got some bills as it is."

"I'll give you twenty-five. Go and talk your head off. Do some work too."

"It's frightfully good of you. They were going to work. They're living very cheaply in rooms somewhere : later on, when it's too hot, they're going into Brittany."

"Well, I don't know how long the money will last, but we'll expect you when we see you."

"Thanks awfully !"

"Now let's walk in the garden."

It was a perfect midsummer evening. Away to the west the sky was still red with the sunset and higher up above them the changing hues of opal merged into a lustrous blue which again was turned to steel in the summit of the vault. To the east shapely stems of firs rose to a black bulk of branches, spread out against the sky like tails of giant peacocks. And behind them was the splendid body of the moor with its great bosom of heather towering into nipples of stone. The night, which had stolen away colour and left only light and shade, had given strength and meaning to every line and curve and silhouette. They walked over soft, clinging grass to a paddock dotted with hen-coops, where the tiny pheasants were wont to squeak and scuttle. The black line of a distant bank twinkled with the tails of

startled rabbits and an owl clattered heavily through leafy boughs. Then followed a silence, vivid and unforgettable, but soon to be broken by the shrill note of a bat that came and went with magic swerve and speed.

"Well," said John Berrisford, after lighting a fresh cigar, "isn't this rather convincing?"

"About the country, you mean?"

"Yes. On such a night do you thirst for Paris and café chatter with a drink-sodden Futurist?"

"It's too clear," answered Martin, looking round. "Perhaps to-morrow night it will be pouring, and then even you may have a hankering after the roar of traffic and the fine smell of a city."

"My dear Martin, you're impossible. You can't have everything your own way. If you intend to worship at one shrine you've got to keep it up for a bit and give the deity a chance of getting hold of you."

"And what if you don't believe in worshipping deities?"

"Then you'll be very unhappy."

"But you don't worship and you profess to be happy?"

"Don't I worship?"

"It's the first I've heard of it."

"How do you suppose I would be here now if I didn't worship the place? I'm a positive mystic."

"And the mystery?"

"The blessed mystery of Ham and Eggs."

“It sounds very fleshly. Tell me about it.”

“Fleshly! It’s the most spiritual thing on earth: in fact it’s the cardinal point in the country gentleman’s faith. But I’d better explain it all from the beginning. Just after I’d left Oxford your grandfather died and left me this estate. I was young and rebellious, as every young man should be, and I can tell you I didn’t enjoy the prospect of settling down as a squire. Like Herrick, I preferred London to ‘that dull Devonshire.’ I wanted to hang about town, to join the devotees of Morris, to be a genius, a writer of brilliant plays and beautiful books, to be a lover of woman and to have breakfast after lunch. So I let this place to a tenant and fooled round.”

“But I don’t want to fool round. I want reasonable work.”

“That’s what they all say. It’s what I said. But I never did any work.”

“And you liked it?”

“On the whole, yes—until at last I went down to stay with a friend at a gorgeous place in the Cotswolds. There was a great grey manor-house, Jacobean and very good about the windows. My host gave me ham and eggs for breakfast: I had been used to omelettes and white wine. After breakfast—God, how I remember it—he took me across his wide, smooth lawns to talk to the keeper. We shot all day—I hadn’t forgotten how to bowl over a pheasant—and then we

dined and drank port and smoked cigars. Suddenly it all flashed across me, the fitness of things, the rich joy of escaping from chattering artists and cranks and reformers and all the crowds who had Done Something : I understood about pomp and circumstance. As I ate my ham and eggs next morning I became an initiate into their perfect mystery. (The eggs, I may say, must be fried, not poached.) The ham was a hill red with autumn and the eggs houses of gold in pure gardens of white. Then I swore to go back home and kick out the cotton king who used to come here for three weeks in the year. I would set up a new temple to the goddess and worship her with all due rites. So I married my host's daughter, who was sound about ham and eggs and never played with fruit at breakfast-time, and here I am. I've stuck to it, for, as I said, you can't worship for a week and then go away : that isn't fair on the mystery. You've got to let things soak in. I've let the spirit of Ham and Eggs soak into me and I'm not tempted now to get it out again."

"And you didn't repent at the beginning?"

"Never permanently. I'm not idle. I'm a J.P., a soundly democratic J.P., to the disgust of the Colonels. I work on a host of committees and I direct two highly disreputable companies. Just because I like to live here in the country and be an acolyte for the goddess, there's no reason why I shouldn't do a lot besides. You can believe that I'm a much better squire than the

rest of them. Of course I'm well aware that there oughtn't to be squires and that the whole thing is wrong. But equally plainly there are squires, and squiredom has its point, of which I may as well make the most. So I've played the part properly. To begin with, I put my farms on a business basis, gave a reasonable minimum, and became unpopular with my neighbours because I made them pay. If the State demands my abolition, I'll go like a shot, but I don't intend to let some magnate from Mincing Lane, who never eats ham, come and buy the place, redecorate the house—as he'd call it—buy some ancestors at Christie's and arrange an aerodrome. You young men think that because you like one sort of pleasure you've got to drop the others. It's all rubbish. I'll read any literature you want and talk you silly, but only after ham and eggs for breakfast and port wine for dinner. To hell with lunch ! ”

John Berrisford talked happily on and Martin was always pleased to listen.

“ You're not converted ? ” said the elder man at last.

“ Only on fine nights.”

“ Well you aren't fit for the mystery. Go away to your Latin Quarter and squalid digs and midnight settling of the universe.”

So Martin went and found various members of his college living in contented poverty. It seemed to him

that, at the rate at which they were existing, twenty-five pounds would keep him for a lifetime. Their nights were late but frugal and an ability to sleep saved the expense of *petit déjeuner*. They found where to obtain the noblest dinner for one franc fifty and made the acquaintance of artists, male and female, who would expound the whole theory of life and its artistic expression if someone paid for their drinks: which Martin did, purposing to improve his French. The weather was dry without being too hot, and one Sunday they went to Versailles in search of amusement, which materialised, for Martin and Lawrence, in the shape of two delightful women who said they had lost their way in the woods and needed a guide. Martin and Lawrence guided them with some skill to a house of refreshment, where the strangers became pleasantly intoxicated and very charming. They soon announced that they had lost their husbands as well as their way and were going to look for them at the station. Thither they went, with Martin and Lawrence following discreetly at a distance. The husbands were found to be in other company and the wives made a scene on the platform; it all ended by Martin and Lawrence, themselves not frigidly sober, removing the other company to a café and comforting their insulted dignity. They had a strange evening, and Martin learned a lot more French.

Owing to one or two reckless evenings he found himself a pauper just when the others were setting off



to see Pierre Loti's fishermen, Paimpol and Guingamp and the quaint religion of the West. Of necessity he returned to Devonshire, fired with a determination to settle those texts which he had carried in vain to Paris.

He crossed by night and came down during the day. When he arrived, it was an evening of great beauty. Suddenly, as he was driven between banked hedges and silent woods of purest green, he came to view the mystery of Ham and Eggs as he had never viewed it before. He knew now how sick he was of Paris with its noise and penetrating smell of petrol, how tired of street cafés and superficial chattering about art. It struck him that if a man isn't going to create something he may as well shut his mouth and leave off jabbering for a bit. Here there was at least silence. Paris had been kindly in its way, but its way was sordid. He had been left with an impression that the city lacked baths and the citizens a cleanly comprehension. To forego ham and eggs and then to eat vastly in the middle of the day ! What insipidity it showed, despite their reputation for taste. And there through a gap in the woods he saw The Steading, solid and calm as ever. Solidity and calmness counted, he knew, and what had Paris to do with them ?

That evening he walked again with his uncle in the paddock, drinking in the sweet air, amazed at the restfulness.

"I enjoyed myself all the time," he said. "It was splendid!"

"That was good. And did you learn anything?"

"Nothing much from our talking. But I think I understand about the mystery."

"I thought Paris might drive it home; it used to smell so in August. Does it still?"

"In places." The scent of fir-trees came to him on the summer breeze. "I do see really," he added, almost pleadingly.

"I'm glad for your own sake. It's as well to look at the future. You may have to go to India. That may mean the end of books and talking and ideas. But you'll get reasonable pay and occasional leave and then you won't feel like anything but shooting and fishing. And perhaps when you're fifty or so you'll struggle back to this kind of existence. I assure you there's something in it all. And once you've dropped your philosophy of this and art of that for thirty years they won't come back. Ham and Eggs will be your only deity. But it isn't merely carnal."

"I see that," Martin replied.

Somehow the future did not seem so ugly to Martin as he stood watching the young moon hanging lightly over the dark shoulder of the moor. It would be good to come back and worship the goddess in Devonshire.

"Thanks for the initiation," he said as they turned back to the house.

## V

“THE’ being no fur’ questions, much pleasure call on Mr Leigh for his paper on Industrialism and the Home.”  
(*Mild applause.*)

The members of the King’s Essay Society were scattered about Martin’s rooms, lounging in window-seats or strewn on the floor. The air was thick with smoke, the carpet invisible by reason of the mingled feet, tobacco, coffee-cups, books, and crystallised fruit. The Push were present in force, and Lawrence, larger than ever, lounged on the sofa and smoked a cigar with ungainly opulence.

Martin, from his seat by the reading-lamp, began to inform them about the home. He started philosophically, taking as his text the assertion that voluntary associations are always preferable to compulsory grouping and that it should be our object to restrict such compulsion as far as possible. The home is a compulsory association and its sphere must be limited. He pointed out that since the whole trend of industrialism had been to invade the home, to capture the women and to drag them out to wage-slavery, it was irrational to stop in the present position. The home must be either a real thing where women were free

from the direct clutches of capitalism and made up for indirect economic dependence by freedom from drudgery in offices and factories, or else we must be logical and complete the tendency by industrialising the home. This process would of course destroy the home as at present understood. But it would substitute for the present compulsory group a voluntary association : and this he would welcome because the home of to-day was not only a compulsory but a fundamentally rotten institution. (*Loud applause from emancipated young men.*)

He didn't care whether women had votes or not : that was inessential. The great thing was to smash the home by making it a commercial unit. This, he maintained, could be done by the State endowment of motherhood and by marriage contracts in which payment for all domestic work should be made by the husband. There must be honest, open payment ; wheedling and pin-money must go. Probably the best solution would be to insist on a fixed percentage of the husband's income going to the wife as a matter of course so long as she lived with him and kept his house.

Even more important was the case of the children, They too must be economic members of a commercial unit. Of course in early childhood that was impossible, but as soon as they reached a reasonable age—say seventeen—they too should have a legal claim to a

certain percentage of the family income, to be continued until they were self-supporting. In the interest of youth, no one should be compelled to support himself until the age of twenty-four, for it was wicked to drive people into offices at eighteen, before they had known freedom of any kind. During these seven years the child might either take his salary and go or stay at home as a paying guest. The amount paid for such board would depend on the standard of life of the family. After all the parents had brought the child into the world without asking if he wanted it, and consequently, so far from having rights with regard to the fruit of their pleasure, they had only duties. Aristotle was reduced to pulp with regard to this point.

Such a policy would safeguard the liberties of the child, who, on reaching a reasonable age, could always go away and need not accept his father's politics and religion with his father's beef. The home would thus be a compulsory association only during early childhood and would be a voluntary association for the adolescent. Thus would we solve the woman question and build an honest, self-reliant nation. Let Dr Bosanquet maunder on about organisms and compare the family meal—that ghastly rite—to the Holy Communion. To hell with such sentimentality! (*Applause.*)

Martin then reverted to political philosophy and maintained that no group whose membership was not

spontaneous could have a vital purpose and a common will. In so far as the family remained compulsory it could have no such will: because a man was born a Jones he need not have the same interests as the rest of the Jones' group: indeed most great men loathed their relations. For the small children a home of some sort, whether private or municipal, was inevitable. The question was whether they were going to save the young adult from sentimental tyranny by insisting on incomes and latch-key rights for sons and daughters and building up a multitude of voluntary co-operative groups on a strictly business basis.

"Of course I admit it is more or less impossible," he said as he finished. "But we may as well talk theory."

There was a short interval, and then Rendell, by grace of his three "F's," was chosen to open the discussion.

He couldn't, he said, accept all that about voluntary associations. He wasn't a Syndicalist, though, judging from the latest efforts of the Tories, we were all not only Socialists, but Syndicalists nowadays. He believed in the State. . . . The State . . . yes, organisms and all that. He didn't mind the commercialism, provided it was State commercialism. Couldn't have these voluntary groups . . . dangerous. Besides, he wanted domestic work all done by clever machines, electric stoves and automatic beds that "made" themselves and became sofas in the next

room by slipping through the wall. This would liberate woman. "Woman's sphere is not the home, her home is the sphere."

With these feeble aphorisms he sat down. He had at least convinced the company on one point—namely, that discussions are always a futile anti-climax.

But Davenant was up, and he was amusing, though he always said the same thing. "I protest," he said, "against industrialism being carried any further. It has marred our men, let us keep it from our women. I want to see a world full of guilds and craftsmen and artificers, not working eight hours a day and then going to a municipal park to drink municipal cocoa and hear the municipal band, but working because they love their work, because it is their creation, their life. And I want to see women working as they love to work, not sordidly and cheaply in a market of labour. The women I want will not work against men, but with them and for them, fashioning beautiful homes and beautiful things of every kind. And you will find that it is no use to put woman on a level with men because women are not crudely rational like men, who analyse and destroy. With woman lies the future, because she alone can create without destroying. Man is destructive and analytic. Woman is ultimate, intuitive, basic, and synthetic."

The less experienced members of the Essay Society began to wonder whether this could mean anything and

roused themselves from sleep. But those who knew Davenant understood. He had an affection for certain words and loved to entwine them with any subject that came to hand. Woman was not the only entity which Davenant had been known to call "ultimate, intuitive, basic, and synthetic."

Then a remote, unknown young man in spectacles and spats said in a plaintive way that the reader of the paper did not understand about Laav: that Laav made all things different: that religion was morality tinged with emotion: that the home was just what its inhabitants made of it: that a change of heart was needed: that you couldn't make men good by Act of Parliament; that, just as dancing was the poetry of motion, so Laav was the poetry of life.

Then this master of the catch-word sat down amid a deathly silence. It appeared afterwards that he had got in by mistake: he thought he was attending a meeting of Oxford Churchmen on Home Missions. Lawrence rose. He began, suitably, by treading on some coffee-cups and bananas, stumbling backward and tripping over the cord which united the reading-lamp and the wall. The lamp fell with a crash and confusion and foul language ensued. At length order was restored and he could let himself go.

"It may seem odd," he said, "but I agree with the last speaker more than with anyone else: and he was about as wrong as can be. He was right when he said



love mattered but wrong in what he meant by it. The love that counts isn't the squidgy, religious thing he wants and it hasn't anything to do with the great passions of poets and intellectual young men. It isn't even Browning's ethereal penguin, half angel and half bird. The love that really matters for people who are interested in the way the world is going is just extensive, sentimental wallowing. Nothing more. Has it ever struck you remote philosophers that making love is the only thing that most people really care about? The papers may rave about a great political crisis or a strike movement. But if you met the average man you wouldn't bet a button that he cared twopence either way, but I'd bet my bottom dollar that he cared about taking a girl out on Saturday night. That's the permanent and irresistible fact. Every cinema film, every piece of cheap fiction, every popular song has one message. There must be 'a strong love interest.' The world has known friendship and sensuality and passion since the beginning. This great flood of sentimentality is as new as it is strong."

He paused a moment to look round. The sleepers had been roused: Lawrence was good when he was under way.

"It came in with the industrial system," he went on. "I believe that there is in man a natural tendency to look for beauty somewhere. Capitalism made of work so foul a thing that it couldn't be found there. And in

answer to demand it turned out a numberless horde of stunted, overworked, half-educated people. Work was foul: for ordinary amusements there was no time, except on Sunday, and then it was wicked. Some means of self-expression had to be found, something to bring comfort of a sort, something that would be suitable for Sundays and the evenings. There was sex. I wonder why it never occurs to the parsons who protest against Sunday games (for the poor) that the British Sabbath is nothing but a forcing-house for sex. The average artisan or shop-girl has not the possibility of any other occupation.

“The worker has combined with his notion of love the notion of home as a place where he will be free to do as he likes, to express himself, to create the ugliness which he or she thinks ‘so sweet.’ The capitalist has bound his hands and his brain and, if the Eugenists get their abominable way, he’ll bind his emotions and his body too. Hitherto he has been free to love as he chooses, and that’s why he loves such a lot. It isn’t for nothing that a very popular song tells of a Little Grey Home in the West where people go to amatory bliss ‘when the toil of the long day is o’er.’

“Well, what’s the upshot of it all? Merely that the home matters far more than you imagine, because it’s the one place where the Servile State hasn’t really got hold of its victims yet. It’s true that a middle-class home may be deadly; so far I agree with the paper.

But I don't agree that the minor's next step is to smash the home altogether. No, we've got to save it if we want to save men from being turned into mere wealth-producing machines. We've got to save it with all its dangers because it is the expression of genuine and valuable emotion. You people are all for smashing the home before you've smashed the system : my idea is just the reverse. When you have a state in which men can take pride and find beauty in their work, you can go in and smash the home. If you try and put the home on a business basis you may help a few middle-class people who have brains and time enough to quarrel, but you'll be taking from the oppressed their only release and making life more commercial and sordid than it is at present. Set up a society where life has rational interests, where a man can express his desire for beauty without leaving it to nocturnal sentimentality, and I'm with you. In the meanwhile there's a good deal to be said for The Little Grey Home in the West. It answers a need. To kill that need you must smash Industrialism. And that, my Fabian friends, is some business."

After such an oration, not silly and blatant as the words of Lawrence often tended to become, it seemed wrong to talk further. Martin, who was by nature far more sympathetic to the popular taste than was Rendell, had been influenced by the last speech and the defence of The Little Grey Home : in his reply he made

a considerable recantation. The society adjourned, the visitors disappeared, and the elect remained to talk. Once more Woman was the theme, and her position and claims were thoroughly discussed until, about midnight, the conversation drifted, like early Greek history, "into the mythical" and fiction succeeded theory. That, from the male talker's standpoint, is the advantage about woman; equally she can point the moral or adorn the tale.

Martin was enjoying his third year. He still had rooms in college and had enough work to keep him contented while the shadow of exams was too remote to cause apprehension. The Push had risen to fame and were running the college: they had taken charge of its societies in a lordly way and talked sense or nonsense as they chose. But the heavy hand of Age was beginning to make them increasingly fond of sense. They were none the less happy, however, for being less superficial, and secretly they were pleased by the admiration of the advanced freshers and the effort made to cultivate their society. Martin's third year was a time of activity, free both from the boundless and discursive idling of his "fresher" period and the anxious strain that pending examinations cannot fail to produce.

Chard, however, was deserting them, for his career at the Union made him a busy man. His triumph (he was Junior Librarian early in his third year) had been mainly achieved by hard work. Office at the Oxford

Union can be won either by courting or despising the members: there is no middle path. The latter method needs audacity and ability. The man who never pulls strings, dashes in late to make his speech, and dashes out again to seek reasonable company may win the votes of the people whom he so treats, provided that he is either really witty, a peer, or a Blue. A titled Blue could afford to do anything, but fortunately neither peers nor Blues deign to have much business with so common a place as the Union.

Chard had adopted the other method. He had pulled strings diligently. He had got to know the right people: he had learned up the right epigrams for the right speeches: asked the right questions of the officers and, when himself an officer, had made the right retorts. He had worked hard in search of votes and had addressed, carefully and capably, nearly every debating society in Oxford. He was standing for the Presidency at the end of the spring term and had every chance of success. The Union loved him, because, not being a Balliol man, he had beaten the Balliol people at their own game.

For the visitors' debate Bavin, K.C., M.P., was coming down, Bavin than whom no fiercer lawyer flayed the Government on provincial platforms and was photographed at country houses. His fees were unparalleled, his wife, a peer's daughter, the most beautiful woman in society. Bavin had done everything as it should be done, at Eton, at Balliol, at All

Souls, at the Bar, in the social world. His career was an epitome of success.

He would, of course, speak last. Chard, a strong supporter of the Government, would precede him. It was hard luck on Chard, one felt, that he should have to come first : Bavin's oratorical bludgeonings would make a mess of Chard. Still Chard was the only man who had any chance against Bavin. One pinned one's faith on Chard to rise to the occasion. Anyhow it would be fun, and everybody would be there.

Martin liked Chard for his thorough-going pursuit of success, his willingness to borrow brilliance from any source, his capacity for making use of anybody and anything.

"Chard is getting the limit," Rendell complained to Martin. "Do you think he ever has a single thought outside his career?"

"Chard is to me as a modern hotel palace to Arnold Bennett. His methods fascinate me: I can't help loving him."

"I suppose he'll be a Cabinet Minister in twelve years or so."

"I trust it won't be long. He'll be very nice on a Front Bench."

So Martin remained a friend of Chard's, and Chard read to him all the great speech wherewith he was to extinguish in advance the raging fire of Bavin's dialectic.

Chard knew his audience and had included just the right jokes.

But Chard was not liked by everyone. Many of the college objected to him for seeking friends outside their walls: the athletic Mandarins had never forgiven his method of meeting their request for his presence at the boats. Chard didn't mind: these people were not voting members of the Union. Most of all he was disliked by Smith-Aitken, whose father, *né* Smith, had made a fortune in pickles. This father, being a self-made man, had entertained notions of his son as a hard worker and had refused to send him to one of the more expensive and aristocratic colleges. Foolishly he forgot to limit his son's allowance, and so Smith-Aitken rode horses and joined the Bullingdon. He was not a nice man. He had greasy yellow curls, several rings, an eyeglass, a motor car, some horses, and a very special taste for liqueur brandy. Chard used to make jokes about him and his victim knew it.

One night Smith-Aitken, having ridden after a fox all day, returned to a repast whose main features were champagne and the very special liqueur brandy. Before he was put to bed he threw the junior dean's bicycle through Chard's window.

Chard spent the next morning making out a little bill. It amused him. In addition to ordinary claims for broken glass he included other items, as:

“To new tablecloth to replace old cloth spoiled by ink

upset by bicycle propelled by Mr R. W. Smith-Aitken—one guinea.”

“To essay on Austin’s ‘Theory of Sovereignty,’ spoiled by ink upset by bicycle as before: at two guineas a thousand words—four guineas.”

The total amount claimed was twelve pounds ten shillings.

By return of messenger Chard received a cheque for that amount.

Smith-Aitken had made the obvious retort. Chard couldn’t, he thought, take the money when the damage had really been small. Chard considered the problem: he was disagreeably surprised at receiving the cheque: it had made him look a fool. There was only one reply, to cash the cheque and give the money to a hospital. This he did. Smith-Aitken, on discovering what had happened, was furious. The money didn’t matter much to him, but he didn’t see why he should have to pay four guineas for making a splash of ink on one of Chard’s jocular essays; besides, he now looked the fool. But he was very polite to Chard whenever he met him and they talked to one another with urbanity.

On the afternoon of the great day on which Chard and Bavin were to batter one another in the arena of the Oxford Union Society, Chard was walking across the quad when Smith-Aitken came out of the porch. He carried a telegram in his hand and rushed up to Chard at once.



“I’ve just seen Bob Marshall,” he said. Marshall was the President of the Union, a new Tory blood and a close friend of Smith-Aitken’s. “He has had this telegram from Bavin. It says that his car has broken down badly. They’re close to a village with a telegraph but miles from a railway. He wants someone to go and fetch him in. Marshall is too busy ; he’s got to see to the dinner and a heap of things. But he saw me in my car and asked me to run out. You’ve met Bavin, haven’t you ? What’s he like ? ”

“I met him at a dinner once,” said Chard. “Successful barrister. Face like a hatchet. Stern, morose, and inexorable, you know the type. But I believe he’s nicer than he looks.”

“Well, look here. You’d better come and talk to him while I drive him in. It would be better to have someone who knows the man. You can arrange what names to call each other.”

Chard was attracted. Bavin was, he thought, a bouncing jackass, but he bounced before a large audience. He was certainly a person to ‘acquire,’ and Chard went about the world ‘acquiring’ the people whom he deemed worthy of that honour. It would be useful to know Bavin well and the formal President’s dinner would not give him much chance. Smith-Aitken, too, had been civil lately ; he really wasn’t such a bad chap. So Chard accepted with alacrity and Martin watched them being driven away. Nixon,

a friend of Smith-Aitken's, went with them. He wanted a lift to the station.

That was at half-past two.

At a quarter to seven Lawrence rushed into Martin's rooms.

"Have you heard the latest?" he shouted. "Our Chard has been kidnapped. It's all over the place. Smith-Aitken got him in his car and God knows where they've taken him."

Martin saw it all in a flash. "But how did it leak out?" he asked.

"One of Smith-Aitken's push let on. Couldn't contain himself for glee. Someone on the Bullingdon suggested it. They all hate Chard, and now they think they've fairly got him. No cheers and epigrams to-night."

"Are you dead certain about it?"

"Well, Chard isn't in his rooms. Neither he nor Smith-Aitken have been seen, and Bavin arrived from town by the 6.5."

Martin was silent.

"It's damned funny," said Lawrence.

"It would be a damned sight funnier if he could get back."

"But he won't. They'll see to that."

"We might get him," said Martin suddenly. "I've got an idea. This morning I heard the man Holland ask Smith-Aitken to dine with him to-night at Vincent's."

Smith-A. said he wouldn't be in Oxford. 'Town?' said Holland. 'No, Abingdon, King's Arms.' Holland said something about a woman in the case and Smith-A. said: 'Not this time. Don't you know?' It was a mere fluke that I heard him. But I fancy we may as well make use of the chance. I'm pretty sure Chard will be a guest at a little dinner in Abingdon."

"Yes, but it's only a possibility. Besides, what can we do?"

"We can look them up, just to emphasise the necessity of keeping secrets."

"It's nearly seven now."

"We can bag Rendell's motor bike and side-car."

"Yes; but what can we do when we're there?"

"Wait for an inspiration."

They went. The journey took some time, for the motor bicycle behaved abominably on Hinksey hill. Not till a quarter to eight did they reach Abingdon. Martin dismounted in the square and left Lawrence with the machine. He walked up to the King's Arms and glanced through the windows of the dining-room, which looked directly upon the street. He had been right in his surmise. Chard was dining with Nixon and Smith-Aitken. Apparently he was making the best of it: they seemed to be a happy party and passed bottles with conviction.

Martin brought the news to Lawrence: "We simply

must get hold of him," he said. "It would be the deed of a lifetime."

"That's all very well," said Lawrence. "But what the devil can we do? We can't just go in and knock out our Bullingdon friends. We'd have the manager and the police nosing round and we'd never get away in time."

"We can't do that," Martin agreed. "And we can't afford to wait. It's nearly eight and we must be back by nine. What do people do in cinema dramas?"

"I know," Lawrence almost shouted. "Don't you remember 'Lust or Love?' and how they rescued the white slave. The drama has its uses."

Martin remembered. "We might try," he said.

They entered the hotel and looked into the smoking-room. It was dark and empty. They collected all the old newspapers, took the wood from the unlit fire, and in the grate they heaped a monstrous pile. After blocking up the chimney they lit their bonfire. Smoke belched out into the room in dense, curling waves. When they could endure it no longer they opened the door and let the smoke into the passage. Then they opened the door of the dining-room and shouted from concealment: "Fire! Help! Fire!"

Smith-Aitken looked round, sniffed, and listened. There was an ominous crackling and an unspeakable smell. "So there is," he said. "I wonder if it started

in the garage. My god." He fled without dignity to his car. Nixon and Chard went into the passage. The manager, the housekeeper, the waiter, and three maids were gasping and fussing and talking about water. There didn't seem to be any.

Suddenly Nixon found himself pushed into the reeking smoking-room and Chard was hauled swiftly into the square. The turmoil was terrific. A policeman came and a crowd began to collect.

"You," said Chard, when he saw Martin and Lawrence.

There was no time for talking. Martin pushed Chard into the side-car, told Lawrence to follow by train, and let the bike do its best. When they were clear of Abingdon he explained things to the mystified Chard.

It was all so simple, so incredible.

"I never dreamed Smith-A. would try on that game," said Chard. "It was rather a dirty trick, but he was charming all the time. We seem to have toured half England during the afternoon. And it was a capital dinner. He brought the wine with him, the red wine of Burgundy, my boy. And I was looking forward to some of that very special liqueur brandy. He never travels without that. And now you've robbed me of it."

The cold, fresh air coming on top of the red wine of Burgundy made Chard more talkative than usual.

At five minutes past eight the debating hall of the Union Society was not merely full : it was crammed with an unparalleled audience. Normally a large crowd would have come to hear Chard : a dense crowd would have come to hear Bavin. But Bavin versus Chard ! It was unique. And Chard was so reliable ! He never failed on such occasions : he had his impromptus ready and his answers well rehearsed.

But to the charms of oratory had been added this evening the fascination of mystery. Rumour has swift wings in such a community as a university, and already it was on everyone's lips that a colossal 'rag' had taken place, that Chard wouldn't be there for the occasion of his life, that he had been kidnapped.

So those who didn't want to hear either Chard or Bavin had come to see if Chard was going to turn up. All along the benches sat serried multitudes of members, whispering, chattering, perspiring. Along all those rows of faces, black and brown, yellow and white, spectacled and pimpled, ugly and less ugly, there gleamed expectancy. And by the doorway and up the gangways there jostled and pushed an ever-growing crowd of curious young men. Perhaps they wanted to see Bavin : certainly they yearned, they most definitely yearned, to know the truth about Chard.

At last the officers filed in amid applause. One almost forgot to look at Bavin, such was the eagerness to see if Chard had really vanished. There was a loud

murmur of surprise. He certainly was not there. Man said to man: "I told you so. They've nabbed him."

"In the absence of the Junior Librarian," said the President, "I call upon the Junior Treasurer to bring forward the weekly list of books."

That was all: no hint as to indisposition, no suggestion of Chard's adventure. There were the usual jokes. Of course people asked about Chard. The President said that he knew nothing of the Junior Librarian. He trusted he would appear in time for his speech. And when he read out the motion before the house and the list of speakers he included Chard's name.

At twenty minutes past eight the first speaker began. He finished at a quarter to nine and two others carried on the debate till half-past. The second of them had reached his peroration. The audience paid little heed to his anxiety about the ship of state. Where the devil was Chard? That was all that mattered. Was Chard really lying gagged and throttled in a ditch?

The speaker sat down and the expectant audience forgot to applaud. There was a pause, followed by much pushing and heaving among the crowd at the door. Suddenly Chard was shot on to the floor of the house. He wore a rough grey suit and was liberally splashed with mud. But he walked quietly to his throne and took his seat by the immaculate President.

"The Junior Librarian," announced the President

without the slightest sign of emotion. It is not for presidents to be human, and Marshall knew his business.

There was a great roar of joy as Chard, foul with mire, advanced to the despatch-box. "I must apologise, sir," he began, "for my late and unkempt appearance. I have been with friends. (*Cheers.*) With very dear friends who would not hear of my going. That is the worst of friends. They are sometimes so pressing. (*Uproar.*) But I would have been earlier and in a more cleanly state had not another friend, in his eagerness to save me from my first friends, been over-hasty. Perhaps he meant it as a compliment to our honourable and gallant visitor when he compelled me to lie, providentially not to die, in the last ditch." (*Prolonged applause.*) Bavin's 'last ditch' speech had been his most notable success. Then Chard proceeded to welcome Bavin, as was his duty, and to trample on him, as was his pleasure. Not even the wet bed of a Hinksey ditch could damp Chard's democratic fervour or blunt the brilliancy of his wit. He had not forgotten his impromptus: in the ditch he had even devised a new one. For half-an-hour he scored point after point. He surpassed himself, he was unique. Possibly, if he had always taken the red wine of Burgundy for his dinner, he would always have spoken like this.

Martin, himself foul with mud, stood in the crowd. He thrilled with the sense of triumph. He remem-



bered the night on which he had fought for Gideon and the Lord. It was adventure once again, terrifying and superb. And again he had been on the winning side. Bavin, K.C., M.P., came as an anti-climax. He addressed a dwindling house and failed to rouse it. He lost his motion and concluded that the undergraduate was not only a traitor to the cause of the Right, but an uncivil jackanapes. What business had they to ask him down and then to take notice only of this Chard fellow?

A few days later Chard was elected to the presidency by a record majority. He had surpassed even the majority of Walmersly, the Churchmen's champion, who had had an election agent in every college, who had whipped up an army of country parsons and other dilapidated senior members with a silent promise of increased vacational facilities, who had entertained over three hundred junior members in two terms.

Chard received a polite note of congratulation from Smith-Aitken and sent, in return, a vote of thanks. Nothing was ever heard about the King's Arms, Abingdon: certainly no damage could have been done.

"Good for you," Martin said to him. "It's been a great business. At least one of the Push is a made man."

"It has been fun," Chard admitted. He was intensely happy.

"All the same it was just as well we had that little

smash. By Jove, we had some luck. No damage done and just enough mud to be convincing. And then that carrier's cart to get us in absolutely up to time."

"Certainly I owe a good many votes to your enterprise in fetching me and to the terrific blend of eagerness and incompetence which put me in the ditch."

"I can't help a skid," said Martin.

"Whose bike?" asked Chard. It was the first time he had thought of it. "We made it look pretty silly."

"Rendell's," answered Martin. "We'd better pay the damage. I'd forgotten."

"That's my affair," said Chard, who felt like generosity. "Comes under reasonable election expenses surely."

Also he gave a dinner to his "workers." King's had not had a President of the Union for several years. That distinction and the fame gained by the kidnapping incident made Chard into a notable. Freshers stared at him in the High and pointed him out to the ignorant.

As a President he shone with incomparable lustre, and he acquired a fine presence and manner for his official duties. The Push in general and Martin in particular felt the reflection of that brilliant light. It seemed good that Chard's taper should be so radiant. Life for the Push, during that third year, was free of care and free of idleness, fruitful of activity and enterprise, restless and fascinating.

## VI

FROM a long vacation spent with the historians and philosophers and from the clash and challenge of autumnal moors Martin came back to rooms in Holywell and the school of Literæ Humaniores. From clean winds and open skies he came back to a gentle greyness or to smudgy days when the rain settled upon the river valley with cruel insistence and on parting left floods and vapours and steamy streets. From working at his ease he came back to work with distaste.

To begin with, he was afraid. The future was big with exams. In eight months his Oxford finals would be upon him, in ten months he would be attempting to satisfy the Civil Service Commissioners. The torture of it! It was all very well for Lawrence, whom a wealthy uncle would make into a chartered accountant, for Rendell, who was to be an amateur barrister and a professional Lib-Lab-Soc, for Chard, with his assured career and Front-bench-in-a-year-or-two prospects; well enough too for Davenant, who had money enough to maintain an adequate, even a graceful, existence while he wrote about the things of art. But for Martin there was only the midnight oil and the wondering about marks.

And he felt helpless. He didn't want to be a Civil Servant, even at home. And as for India or the Straits! He wanted to be in London with the rest of them, keeping up the old ideas and intimacies and enthusiasms. If he had only felt that such a life was absolutely impossible, he would have taken his fate more graciously. But it seemed that with an effort, with daring, he might get out of it all and find a job that would keep him in London without starvation: but he hadn't the pluck to look for the job, and he was content to drift on the wave of chance. Circumstance was moulding his life, whereas he ought to be moulding circumstance. Why couldn't he be strong and do things? He despised his puny helplessness and cowardly drifting: the more he gazed into himself the less did he see to admire. Naturally this did not improve his work.

He lived with Rendell and Lawrence and Chard in a good house in Holywell: Davenant had gone down. Chard shared a sitting-room with Rendell, and they both worked with vigour, being men of sense and ambition. Upstairs in a great low-raftered room Martin dwelled with Lawrence. He began by labouring with a fond frenzy, but he soon fell into his companion's easier ways and sat by the window watching the passers-by. Holywell is a sound and regular street. You either belong to it or you don't. And if you do belong to it everybody knows that you belong to it

and has a notion of your habits and your time-table. Martin and Lawrence soon found out about everyone, and their chief topic of conversation was the late appearance of this man or the frequent journeys of another, the new hat of the girl opposite or the names and nature of the young women who came hustling out of St Cross Road. They despised Chard and Rendell for their ignorance and wilful neglect of the street and its population.

It was a soothing occupation to watch folk come and go. Soothing, too, was the soft glory of the street itself as it curved away to the Broad with its sombre harmony of pink and grey. Behind the sweeping splendour of the way itself might rise a sunset sky of winter, blue with the lustre of steel, a tower of strong darkness above the fading glow. And then lamps would twinkle and windows pour golden floods into the road and a man would think about having tea. All good men live in Holywell when they "go out."

But it was not always thus. Often everything was ugly, and Martin had indigestion after lunch and thought once more of May Williams. He hadn't seen her at all: perhaps she had escaped from Botley. Really he didn't care: astonishing how unattractive was the memory of that affair! No, May had not been good enough, but there was a girl who walked up and down the street: she too had roses in her hat, but the colour was not the same. And she was different,

remote and inaccessible. Martin said nothing and did nothing, but he always looked out when she passed on her way to and from shops : it gave him more pain than pleasure to watch her pass by, and yet he kept on looking.

And then there was Mr Cuggy. Cuggy was Martin's tutor in philosophy and had the reputation of being the most muddled thinker in Oxford : his claims were based on a certain article in *Mind* which had broken all records (already high in English Philosophy) for the amazing technicalities of its jargon and the vile barbarity of its writing. But of course he was a dear old man. In his youth a torrent of Hegelianism had passed over him and he remained always a limp victim of the drenching he had then received. He clung, this mariner shipwrecked in German waters, to the rock of the Absolute and dared not relax his grip because he saw no other prominence amid the devouring waves. And everywhere, should he slip off, were the pragmatic sharks lurking for the prey. To this rock he dragged his pupils quite irrespective of their capacity to understand the process and to cling coherently : as a result they clung only in their essays and dropped off in private thinking. Time's ironies are pleasant and Mr Cuggy made many a "prag."

Martin learned all the proper words and delighted his tutor with some cant about the higher synthesis and the disappearance of all antinomies in the absolute.

In private discussion he differed. "I say. What shall we do about this philosophy?" he asked Rendell.

Even Rendell had been sickened by Cuggy. "Of course it's all drivell," he admitted. "Just systematised drivell."

"My dear ass," put in Lawrence, "has that only just struck you? I remember being rebuked for my early scoffing. The main object of these blighters is just to wrap up in a perfectly unintelligible and ungrammatical jargon what everybody else can see without bothering about it. They've got to do something to justify their screw and their measly existence, so, like the politicians, they keep up a nice series of sham fights which never end."

"The main point for us," said Martin, "or at any rate for unhappy me, is to find out how to score marks at the game. I can stand fair nonsense, but old man Hegel is a bit thick. On the other hand, pragmatism is just as silly and, what's worse, hated by the gods that be. No marks in that, I'm afraid. We've got to find a middle path."

"There's the Cambridge stuff. Russell and Moore, Business-like and quite unattractive."

"Oh, we can't be Tabs," said Lawrence.

"Well what can we be?"

"Why not bag a bit of James Ward, a bit of Bergson, a bit of Croce, and be Pampsychistic Pluralistic Realistic Modern Young Men?"

"It'll take some doing," said Martin dubiously. "It's no good being sloppy. The youths who think they'll get firsts because they know all about Beauty never get very far. What we need is Philosophy on a Business Basis. Six questions in three hours. Answers to all the problems of the universe guaranteed all correct in thirty minutes."

"Let's draw up a scheme," said Lawrence, "and diddle this damned philosophy."

So they settled down and arranged a system: they made out a plan of what they were going to think about all the possible questions. That is the best of philosophy: examiners may weave words but they have only about a dozen real questions from which to choose.

By the end of the term they had settled the business of wisdom. The schedule was complete and they had a short way of dealing with every problem from the Universality of Nature to the value of the negative and hypothetical judgment. Of course to achieve a "position" they had to sacrifice their consciences at times. It was all quite shameless and quite successful.

"After this," suggested Chard, "you might get made Railway Managers."

"Unless," said Rendell, "we get on to the staff of a certain penny weekly."

In December Martin went down once more to Devonshire. To his surprise he found Freda there.



Almost two years had elapsed since he had seen her and he had almost forgotten her existence. But now he remembered vividly and was glad.

She had not altered and he rediscovered her perfect insignificance. How ridiculous it seemed that, while Margaret Berrisford with her health and strength need only work when she chose and as she chose, this wisp of a woman should have been caught up in the machinery of industry : ridiculous that one so fragile should be self-maintenant. He had little chance to talk to her that evening, but on the following afternoon he went with her to the village and along the Tavistock Road. He asked her about herself.

"They soon got rid of me," she answered. "The Trades Union people, I mean. They were naturally sick of my coming late and getting ill and being a general nuisance. Then I got in with some Suffrage Women and they gave me work. One of the new peace-and-goodwill societies. They want to link up the movement and then agitate according to Lor-an-order. They're so peaceful and orderly that, not being engaged in fighting other people like tigers, they just quarrel among themselves like cats. Oh, I do get sick of it."

"What do you do for them ? Speak ?"

"Oh no. Just the office work. They worked me quite hard and paid me very little, and, when I murmured, they hinted that if I was only loyal to my sex I'd do the whole show for nothing. Never work for

lovers of humanity : their love has a background of dividends and West End drawing-rooms. It's none the worse for that, but they expect your love to take the form of more work for less pay. It's not good enough. I'd rather be a genuine wage-slave, thanks very much."

"City office, regular hours, and no nonsense?"

"That's it."

"Have you been ill this winter?"

"Yes. I was rotten for a bit; Margaret has been awfully good to me. When she heard of it she fished me out of my lodgings and made me come here. I was in bed a fortnight and must have been a beastly nuisance. They are splendid, all of them."

Martin agreed.

"And what about you?" she asked.

He explained his hopes and fears.

"You've no business to mope," she told him. "Don't you understand that you're an extremely lucky person? I wish I had your chances."

"I suppose I'm lucky," he said without conviction, trying to feel ashamed of his despair.

"Of course you are. Anyhow it's silly to get despondent. Besides, you're bound to do well."

"Am I? Why?"

"Because I tell you to. Do get firsts and things."

It pleased him to be ordered. He stopped in the muddy lane between two stark hedges that stood naked against the grey December sky.

"Do you care?" he asked.

"Of course I care."

"Why? I mean——" he paused awkwardly.

"Don't ask silly questions," she answered. "It's too cold to stand about."

They walked on.

"It must be pretty sickening for you," he said, "having to go on with this drudgery."

"It is rather rotten. But it can't be helped."

"Can't you get some intelligent kind of work, writing or something?"

"I'm not good enough. Don't make foolish interruptions. It's quite true. And remember I chucked up a teaching post."

"But routine must be worse for a person like you."

"It isn't nice. Really I think the most miserable people of all are those who are just too good for dull work and not good enough for real, original, creative work."

"That's painfully true," he answered. And there, gloomily, they left it.

That night Martin reflected on the events of the day. What surprised him most was the depth and intensity of his feelings about Freda. It wasn't love, it wasn't mere sympathy: was it just sentimentality? It is a habit of the younger generation in these days to turn their sexual emotions into channels of political reasoning: the result is called feminism. Instead of defend-

ing hapless women with strong right arm they are eager to defend underpaid women by strike or Act of Parliament. There is little difference, for the reason that Nature cannot be cheated. The pitchfork of modernity will not keep it out, and chivalry, loathed in name, comes bravely back in disguise. In matters of personal relation feminism is dangerous just because it is insidious. Martin had already formed his picture of Freda, overworked and underpaid, homeless and driven from pillar to post. The image was painful, but it pleased him so to suffer.

On Saturday there was to be shooting, the last of the season. People were coming down for the week-end and, doubtless, neighbours would be there. In the home coverts cock pheasants still trumpeted in peace, but their time had come.

Martin had no gun of his own, but sometimes he used a spare weapon of his uncle's. If he had been more efficient he would have liked the actual shooting: he could see the point of it and appreciate the thrill of waiting and achieving. But he had neither the long experience nor the swift eye and he was glad when the gun was needed by someone else. Freda would not see his lack of skill, for Robert had brought a friend from town for whom the gun would be required.

Neither Margaret nor Freda went out in the morning, and Martin also stayed in to work. The guns came back to lunch at half-past twelve, as they had begun to

shoot early, for that made a better division of the short daylight. When they went out again Margaret accompanied Robert's friend and Martin took Freda to watch the first drive. The air was soft: otherwise Freda, being still convalescent, would not have been allowed to stand about. But it was considered warm enough for her if she wore a thick motoring coat of Margaret's. Here and there films of mist hung thinly over fields, but in the woods it was clear: the wind spoke gently in the trees or passed in silence down the rides and open glades. Underfoot rustled the drifting, many-tinted leaves and the flight of a startled song-bird made the still air reverberate. The fragrance of distant pines was mingled with the scent of the leaf-mould and sometimes the glint of the birch's silver broke the splendid monotony of giant trunks.

The mystery of Ham and Eggs flashed across Martin's mind. The cult must not exclude woods.

"Aren't these trees wonderful," he said simply.

"I think they're awful, in the proper sense of the word. They make me excited and terrified and happy."

"Awful is the right word. Why did men spoil it?"

"We've managed to spoil most things."

"Will they begin shooting soon?" asked Freda after a pause.

"The beaters will be coming up soon."

"Why do people do it? It seems so unnecessary, so savage, somehow."

"So it is savage. That's just the point. It answers a need, I suppose. You wait till you hear an old cock pheasant come crashing down. There's something very satisfactory about the noise he makes."

"It's too horrible."

"Wait and perhaps you'll find that you have a few primitive instincts left in you. You may be free of them; some people are. It isn't only the passion to kill, though. It's the passion to get over obstacles and do something immensely difficult. That's why walking-up birds is better than driving. When I've got a gun I want to hit an object which is incidentally a bird. It isn't the killing that matters."

"But why don't you shoot at targets or clay pigeons?"

"There you have me. I suppose at that point the savagery comes in. It isn't the same to shoot at disappearing targets, and that's all one can say. Hullo, they're starting, we'd better stop talking."

Far away at the back of the covert arose the noise of cracking twigs and trampled leaves: closer and closer it came until the sounds were distinguishable, now the tapping of a stick on a tree, the beating of a bush, the long-drawn cries of "Mark" and "Forward," the swift whir of wings, and at last the sharp crack of guns. The woods, once awful with still silence, were all sound and movement. The gun, behind whom Martin and Freda were standing, had only one chance and took

it—a beautiful right and left. The second bird fell close to them, crashing through branches to a soft bed of leaves. Freda gasped and jumped forward. The drive was over.

“You wanted it to fall?” said Martin, taking up the warm, motionless body.

“I think I did,” she confessed. “But only for a moment.”

“It seemed right, didn’t it?”

“I suppose so. But I couldn’t touch it.” She paused. “Yes, I was glad when he hit them both,” she added. “The strain of waiting and looking and listening seemed to make it all different. And he was so quick. I can’t think how he could have got round to the second. It was all wonderful in a horrible, alluring kind of way.”

“I was right,” said Martin. “There is something in it, you see.”

He was glad that she understood: it gave them another point in common. The next beat would take them some way from home, out to the bleaker side of the woods. Martin proposed that they should wait until the guns returned and Freda was willing. They went to the pines where the ground was clean and firm and there on a bank they waited.

And there too Martin became more than ever aware of Freda. She was digging her toes in the soil and at the same time leaning strongly back upon the dry bank.

Thus her body was strung and braced tightly so that she seemed to him to be one strong curve against the ground. And yet she was not strained uneasily and her limbs were all fine sweep and rhythm. He drank in the exquisite grace of her fragility. Everything about her was brown, her hair, her eyes, her borrowed coat, her long boots vanishing beneath brown tweed, even the feather in her adorable hat. Against the brown couch of the bank the various tints joined in a sombre harmony.

"You mustn't stare," she said suddenly. "It's rude."

"How can I help it?" he answered.

"Easily. I'm not a country girl and I'm not at all attractive in this get-up. I hate it. Great, clumsy boots!"

"You mustn't say that. You're just perfect like this. It seems so rotten that you should be dragged away from it all and made to do the world's drudgery and not see these places. You do fit into them, whatever you may say."

She turned and looked right into his eyes. "Dear boy," she said, "you mustn't take me too seriously. I'm quite happy. You mustn't worry about me."

"I can't help it," he broke out. "It's in me to feel for you, to hate the waste of you, to want you happier and stronger and getting more out of things and more out of the things you do get." He told her of his hopes and fears and how she had affected them and drawn



him out of them. She had taught him not to grumble about an excellent fortune. And he began to tell her of her own perfection, but she stopped him.

"It's very, very nice of you to care about what becomes of me," she said. "I think you exaggerate my wasted capacities: in fact I know you do. But whether or not you're right about me, I know I'm right about you."

"And what about me?"

"That you aren't in love with me at all. You're rather lonely and afraid of the future and perhaps, well, sentimental. It's nothing to be ashamed of. It shows that you're generous, because you're trying to get rid of your own despair by trying to share mine, which doesn't exist as a matter of fact. You're a little in love with love and very young and very nice. And now I'm getting cold so please take me home and be quite honest with yourself."

As he walked back with her he said very little. Against his conscience he was angry, angry at what he knew was his own humiliation. She had been so damnably maternal and—worse still—so damnably right.

On Monday she went back to town; she had forbidden him to renew the subject and they had talked as they originally talked, with argument, like undergraduates. But for Martin such conversation had lost its charm and he knew such relations could not last.

Still he wanted her to be a martyr dragged to the altar of commercialism and she had refused to think of martyrdom. Her happiness galled him, as he confessed to himself with shame. Yet less than ever was he able to forget her.

So Freda went. And Martin remained to work feebly and to write long letters and to sit fidgeting until the second post had come in and he knew that to-day at any rate she hadn't answered.

But sometimes she did answer, shortly indeed but kindly ; and he was happy then.

In January he went back to Oxford and the further settling of philosophy on a business basis. Amid all the energies and diversions of terms the memory of Freda did not vanish nor even fade. Hitherto the postman had been neglected in Martin's survey of the passers-by, but now he was more important than any one even of the other sex. Martin had never before noticed how many posts there were in a day, but now he knew all about it.

## VII

ON an evening of early June Martin, Rendell and Lawrence punted up a backwater of the Thames. It was cool on the water's surface and a lingering remnant of breeze stole across the silent meadows and played gently with the willows. They had escaped from Oxford and the gas-works, from gramophones and the university boathouse. It was a special haunt of their own to which they had come, one of Hinksey's unpathed waters, very narrow and remote. At length they made fast to a stump of wood and smoked in peace.

It was all over. They had lived through a week of sweltering agony, of darting to the Schools in cap and gown and stuffy clothes, of darting out again to see how many words they had got wrong in their translation. Such is the dignity of Greats. Abiding by their plans, they had worked their philosophy according to schedule and answered their questions on grimly practical lines. They hadn't made bold to know about Beauty.

"Well," said Rendell, "that's the end of that."

"What?" yawned Martin. He was tired alike by his exertions and recent celebration of the end.

"Of everything."

"Edified?"

"I think so. It's been rather majestic somehow. To have to know about everything and keep a theory about every branch of thought and action. One doesn't do it, but it's rather good to think one is supposed to do it."

"Depressing enough before the event." Martin remembered nights of wild battling with insoluble problems and days when he had gazed in despair at papers recently set and realised his complete incapacity to inform the examiners about modality or the legal aspects of the Cæsar-Pompey quarrel.

"You used to get jolly black?" said Lawrence, remembering silences and outbursts or the lonely walks that Martin sometimes took.

"It's all very well for you," retorted Martin. "You may have to look forward to dull sort of work, but you're secure enough. I'm just beginning this business of getting a job and it's poor fun. I suppose it means India."

"You'll get a decent screw," said Rendell by way of comfort.

"And come back without a liver or an idea."

"Except about curry and cigars."

"I can't imagine our gloomy Martin as a sun-dried bureaucrat," Lawrence remarked. "But I suppose he'll have punkahs and khitmutgars and syces and be

the devil of a chap. I daresay it's all right when you're there."

"There are few people who loathe the British Empire more cordially than I do," said Martin. "But there seems to be no way of keeping clear of it. Anyway I've quite settled not to starve as a journalist. Sooner the White Man's Burden than that."

"Anyhow," said Rendell, still eager to comfort, "we don't know anything about the Burden, do we? There may be something in it."

"Well, one thing is quite plain," asserted Martin, "there's no charity going as far as I am concerned. If I have to go and live in a dirty hot hole I go there because I can't get a decent living otherwise. I go on the make and I'll resign as soon as I can get the thousand that they're always chattering about. None of your Burden for me."

"To gather from what one sees," said Lawrence, "the Burden doesn't weigh very heavily on the shoulders of the big pots. They seem to do themselves pretty well."

"Of course they do. That's what they go for. How many varsity men would go abroad if they could live in comfort and get the same wage at home? Not ten per cent. And who can blame them? India pays, and it pays for hard, dangerous, useful work. I don't mind men going for the pay, but I do mind journalists blithering about their self-devotion in taking up the noble load."

"All the same," said Rendell cheerily, "you've quite a good chance for the Home."

"I wish the deuce I had," sighed Martin. "If I'd worked all the time I might have done it. But it's too late now. I don't really know anything and will be lucky to get India. Come on, let's move a bit."

During the next few days Martin managed to forget the looming menace of the East. The heat remained and they lived on the river, bathing and sleeping and feeding in turn. And then here were a couple of farewell dinners. The champagne flowed and Holywell was full of rushing people and strange noises. The passing of Lawrence was worthy of his whole career and on his last night a stalwart cortège bore him like a warrior to his rest.

After the end of term Martin stayed up to work. July was a month of lonely misery, of dust and bad tennis and the cramming of English Literature. At last the time for his Greats viva came and he walked down to the Schools with Lawrence, there to be asked by a nervous little man whether he thought things or thought thoughts. He at once informed the nervous little man that this was an idiotic question and that Descartes . . . his knowledge of Descartes was overwhelming. Lawrence was dealt with by a truculent, red-faced man who asked him minute questions about the wanderings of the Phocæans. Lawrence just smiled wisely and was sent away. Rendell's turn

came later. He was asked about the foundations of morality and maintained that while Kant was very wise and venerable he was also very wrong. But he remained respectful of Kant. One can only be offensive to J. S. Mill in Oxford nowadays, but about him one can say anything.

Once more Rendell took a first, Martin a second, and Lawrence a third. It was the history that kept them apart. Their philosophy had been uniformly good; Mr Cuggy was filled with pride and wrote to congratulate them all: whereat they wondered what would have happened if they had continued to cling to that philosophic rock, the Absolute. Yet it was nice of him to write. That was the worst of Cuggy: you couldn't dislike him.

From an Oxford of glaring streets and searching, irresistible dust Martin went up to London to seek his fortune at Burlington House. Later he remembered that August as a month of blazing heat and tired hands and aching head. He remembered a gloomy place shaped like a theatre where morose men asked him if he had a buff book and tore his papers from under his pen when time was up. There were days of solid labour and nights of anxiety spent with the text-books for to-morrow's exams: and there were unforgettable crowds of candidates sitting upon the steps before each paper and going over their notes for a last time with feverish futility. He remembered hating the people

from Wren's as he had hated the Grammar School boys in his scholarship exams, jealously loathing and dreading their preparedness and notes and iron methods. He remembered the filthy temper he was in and his contempt for the scrubby little man who sat next to him and muttered to himself incessantly. Martin had crammed Blankney's notes on the Attic constitution because he had heard a rumour that Blankney was examining, and he remembered a ceaseless effort to display knowledge which he did not possess and to scrape up marks, marks, marks. . . .

But the exams brought him also to Freda.

He found her pale and tired and more fragile than ever: he found her working from ten to six and idling despondently in the evenings. Quite obviously she was not the woman he had known in Devonshire.

Then she was strong and at her ease, full of mysterious confidence, rejoicing in life and her ability to cope with it. He had been to her merely an undergraduate, nicely foolish, he had amused her and she had read his letters, even answered them. He had chattered of affection and she had laughed him gently to scorn.

Now he came to her as a man in a world where men were scarce and men were needed. But it was Freda who had changed, not Martin. The transformation of the boy into the man was due to the heat of summer and the click of typewriters. To one deafened with the city's roar Martin brought memories of perfect



woods and lonely pines that stood out against emptiness, starkly black. They used to go out together in the evenings, to Richmond, to Putney Heath, to Hampstead. They went where the others went because they were as the others, hard-worked, tired-out, desperately needing one another. There was no glory of passion in their evenings. Street lamps did not flame as flowers of the East, trees did not tower like giants luring them with soft voices, water was still water. Earth and sky had not altered for them: it had not altered for the others who wandered in the same places.

One Monday at half-past five Martin hurried out of Burlington House after his second paper in English Literature. Never in his life had he written more in six hours: he had drained his soul of platitude and pretence, discreetly praising and blaming men whom he had never read, never, thank God, would read, all the remoter 'C's,' Cowley, Cowper, Crabbe.

His nerves were all frayed. He hated the statues of Leibnitz and Locke and Plato . . . what had Platonism to do with that sordid spot? He hated the Burlington Arcade with its lingering odour of stale scent: a woman smiled at him horribly and he hated her. He hated Piccadilly because it was dusty and deserted, and he hated the tea he drank because it was too hot and there were flies on the table. He hated himself for not remembering a quotation. How plain it all seemed now, and yet he had missed it.

He met Freda at half-past six at Waterloo and they went down to Thames Ditton. The river was crowded with punts and canoes and boats of every kind, but they joined the press. As darkness fell lights began to glitter like jewels across the water. Here and there a Chinese lantern swung on a prow, the glowing end of a cigarette flickered and was gone. Ripples of laughter floated from a nook where people supped, the popping of a cork, the tinkling of distant music. But if there was not solitude or silence, there was at least a breeze that shook the parched leaves and whispered in bough and rush. Martin found a vacant berth deeply curtained with bushes and low-hanging trees and there they made fast the punt and lingered.

They talked a little of his exam and of his prospects. And then they talked of her prospects.

"You're too fine for it," he said suddenly. It was what he had said so often before, but now she was no longer maternal or cheerily scornful of his protests. She yielded alike to his thought and to his touch. Never had she so yielded before. For Martin the world became a great, black silence : the only thing he knew was the closeness of her. That she trusted him, and wanted him was joy : that she was there, beside him, his, was magic. Because she for the first time yielded, he for the first time forgot. Never before had he quite escaped from himself, from considering the impression that he was likely to be making, from worrying fears

and self-conscious timidity. Now he was free. He was aware only of the intangible fragrance of her hair, the warmth and movement of her body, the curve and rhythm of her limbs, the instant claim of her fragility. Everything became different.

At the end of the month Freda had a fortnight's holiday and went to an aunt in Yorkshire. Martin had arranged to meet Lawrence and Rendell at Seatoller in the Lakes. He went in a bitter mood, hungry for Freda, physically stale, and hopeless. But the traditional rain never came and soon they knew every crag of Honister and Grey Knotts, of Glaramara, of The Gables and the Scawfells, of the Langdale Pikes. The challenge of wind and weather on the hills and the flaming splendour of Borrowdale in autumn drove apprehension and despair from his soul. He learned that in some places a man cannot be morbid.

On an evening of late September they were playing three-handed auction. A telegram arrived from Devonshire. The commissioners had sent the result to his home address, it seemed.

Martin put down his hand and tore open the envelope. He had passed fifty-first on the list.

"Looks like India," he said quietly.

Neither Rendell nor Lawrence knew what to say. He had wanted the Home service, they knew, and

fifty-first would not get that for him. They muttered congratulations self-consciously.

Martin took up his hand once more. It was solidly black.

“Five hearts?” he said. “Five royals.”

The opposition collapsed and he made his tricks.

They played late, thinking only of the cards. Martin's career was settled, his life mapped out, his whole future determined by that message, and they talked of rubbers and pence. If he had miraculously passed in first or failed altogether they would have discussed it, but, because he had achieved the expected mediocrity, by tacit convention they were silent. The cards were really more important.

## VIII

As Martin lay in bed that night it occurred to him with all the violence of a real discovery that he was, under certain conditions, the destined ruler and administrator of a nation far vaster and more ancient than his own, a nation of whose religion, ideals and practical needs he knew nothing whatever. He was equally ignorant of its population, products and methods of life, though of course he had a year in which to learn about these things. Incredible that he, Martin, twenty-two, boyish and superficial, should be a guardian of this people, a pro-consul in the making! And perhaps more strange was his apathy. In addition to his complete ignorance about India he cared nothing for the place, for how can a man, temperamentally inclined to Nationalism rather than to Imperialism, care for a nation which he only knows by a red blob on the map or by finding its stamps in collections restricted to the British Empire. India meant nothing to Martin. He had read Kipling, and certainly no tales of his had, despite the magic of their narrative, made him responsive to the call of the East. He still took it for granted that British rulers there would be as British rulers elsewhere, bigoted, snobbish, and unexpectedly

effectual: corrupt, perhaps, fooling the poor and honouring the rich, bungling and lying and making money. That, he felt, was the attitude of the men he met, exaggerated, no doubt, but based on fact. But as he lay gazing at the cracks in the old ceiling above him his thoughts went back to the sheer bulk and beauty of The Gable, to Holywell at dusk, to the woods around The Steading and the cult of his uncle's deity. About the Oriental world he neither knew nor cared. He couldn't believe in it, so remote and unimportant it still seemed.

At Oxford during his Indian year he found that the future civilians took little interest in the place to which they were going. They wanted the pay and perhaps, though not admittedly, the possibility of a knighthood and a row of letters after their names. Certainly no one was concerned about the White Man's Burden. Naturally he did not blame these people: like himself, they were only seeking for a reasonable livelihood. But he was sickened by the cant he discovered in speeches and papers, the froth about self-sacrifice and noble callings: the work might, he acknowledged, be good and useful, it might promote the welfare of mankind and bring the peace of Cæsar to a troubled world, but no one was giving anything away in going to do it.

And he was lonely now. He had rooms in narrow Ship Street, and there he spent solitary days and nights

craving the society of the Push : sometimes one of them would come down for a week-end, but otherwise there was scarcely anyone to whom he could talk. The winter crept on dismally, and Martin studied Bengali or rode on horseback over Shotover and Port meadow. But there was something wrong about Oxford : he felt old and alien and the college, when he entered it, seemed to be bubbling over with freshmen, all amazingly young and innocent and happy. He was vaguely jealous of them, uncharitably hostile. Were they not talking as he had talked, idling as he had idled ? One friend he had, a poet in his third year, discreet and practical. From time to time Martin dined with him and forgot about India.

Most of all Freda mattered. Now that he was alone and despondent, he relied on her letters and his memories and thoughts of her to make life easier, even more tolerable. He retraced the whole course of their friendship, trying to reshape their relations. He remembered her first as an arguer, a friend to whom he had talked and talked : and then as a martyr, the sufferer for whom he had felt with a genuine, unstinting pity. And at last . . . well, at last as a woman, as a person who had the power of making life different, of turning London into an enchanted fairyland and India into a vision of cool beauty, a person of infinite tenderness and understanding, a person whose presence and sympathy could stop things hurting. What rendered

him most happy was his ability to meet her on equal terms. Hitherto she had been self-supporting, he a pampered undergraduate. He had had prospects but no certainty, and he had shrunk, even on that summer night upon the river, from saying things that he wanted to say, because he felt that it wasn't fair. One couldn't honourably say these things until one was 'a made man': one couldn't decently make women expect things unless you had some reasonable basis for hopes. With girls like May Williams it didn't matter what one said, because he had been just a 'fellow,' she just a 'girl.' Such affairs had their agreeable conventions. But with Freda it had been different, because there was no such tacit agreement: she might, she would expect him to take her out of her toil and weariness. And now he was free to say and do as it pleased him. He was 'made' and had position, for only by great folly and stupidity could he lose his opportunity.

At the end of term he went up to London. He told the Berrisfords that he had to go to a riding test at Woolwich and wanted to see the varsity rugby match. It is odd that a young man should be instinctively ashamed of love: he will tell his companions of his bodily desires gladly and even proudly, but he will hesitate before he confesses a craving for sympathy. He did ride, it is true, and he went to Queen's Club, where he caught an occasional glimpse of Cambridge three-quarters running abominably fast. It was one



of the 'slump' years in Oxford football, the reaction after the reign of the immortals at Iffley Road, when the whole city and university trooped down to watch six elusive Internationals playing with the opposition's defence. Now Cambridge was doing the same and avenging those past defeats. Humiliating to watch those Tabs waving hats and yelling and ultimately carrying their captain from the field of glory! Comforting to reflect that when Oxford won they won soberly and with restraint, as though victory were for them the normal and accustomed thing! Only Tabs would behave like that. With such thoughts he tried to soothe his anger and disgust.

In the evening, because Freda had a headache, Martin dined with Lawrence and became expensively drunk: later he had memories of a crowded music hall, of distant singers and dancers flitting incessantly before white scenery: they worried him and he shouted at them to go away, but seemingly they refused. There were recollections of drinks with an old Elfreyan and the toasting of the school, of an elaborate conversation in French with a woman who only spoke Cockney, of a speech to the Indian nation begun on the crowded promenade and ended magnificently from the fountain at Piccadilly Circus. Probably there was supper somewhere and more noise and then he must have walked miles, for suddenly he became sober and found himself far down the Fulham Road. He picked up a

taxi, and managed to get into bed more or less successfully about half-past three.

Freda, too, had spent a dull autumn. She had spoken the truth when she said that she was just too good for dull toil and not good enough for real work. The system was gradually devouring her and she had long ago reached the stage at which the one thing in life that matters is six o'clock, the hour of release from the drudgery and sordid gloom of the office. She lived for her leisure and on her leisure she had nothing to spend. There were friends whom she saw at intervals, but their intimacy had limitations and was only close enough to drive home the need for real companionship. In one matter she had been fortunate. She had found a cheap room at the top of an old house in Bloomsbury and was thus spared the necessity of going to one of those gloomy mansions for working women. It was a small room, high up and chilly : but it was hers, and even the gas-fire could not rob it of real comfort.

Martin had not meant to linger in London as he had work to do. But he soon realised the impossibility of going away. Not only did he need Freda, but she too needed him. There was no advantage in denying the mutual emptiness and mutual satisfaction. So he stayed, and in the mornings and afternoons he read his Indian law and history, or wandered about London, loitering in picture galleries or threading the ways of Bloomsbury with many a passing glance at the house

where Freda slept. Squarely and simply it stood, with no flaunting brick-work or Victorian embellishment : its colour was the nameless colour that a London house should have, the sombre blending of grey and red and deepest brown. On one side was a mean street, one of those sad thoroughfares which Chance has brought to destitution : the houses were good and strong, but each contained a score of people and belched out numberless squalid children to play and quarrel in the teeming gutters. On the other side a wide street ran straight up to a square garden and the two lines of houses converged and faded away in a haze of smoke and branches. In the afternoons, when Martin walked there, sunset would stain the gentle greyness with pink or, in angrier mood, would stab dark clouds and leave great rifts of red. It was all so strong and quiet and dignified, seeming actually to exhale the finest quality of London. The street, at any rate, was worthy of her.

When the long day's wait was over he would have Freda to himself. Then London became beautiful in every line and form and colour. The lamps were flaming jewels and the rain-soaked, glittering streets were bands of silver : the murkiest lane threw off its squalor, and the night, with its great glooms and shadows, its sudden bursts of iridescence and its mystery of swiftly moving figures, made him think of Eastern jungles, splashed with fierce colours, cavernous

with infinite shade. Then a woman, rouged and powdered and swathed in tawny fur, would sweep majestically past: she was the tiger who burned brightly. Formerly he hated these women, because they charmed him, challenged and held his gaze, hated them too because they brought home to him the fact that he had not the courage of his desires. But now he need not care. That was the great joy of it.

So in this enchanted forest of London they walked and drove, feasted and saw the play: not one play, but all the plays. And after the play they feasted again and were contented. It was a forest that tended to swallow gold rather than yield it, and Martin had to borrow on the security of his position as a probationer in the Indian Civil Service. But there was pleasure in the signing of the bond.

Sometimes they would sit in Martin's hotel, which had a large, deserted lounge with sensible corners and crannies for conversation. Sometimes he would go back with Freda to her room in Bloomsbury and wait until she turned him out.

"I won't have you here after eleven," she told him and quoted from *The Great Adventure* on reputations, the coddling and neglect of them.

"But if you have me at all——" he protested.

"I'm English and I believe in compromise," she answered.

So he stayed till eleven. It was a neat place and

orderly with naked walls : he loved it as he loved its owner. When the washstand and bed had been hidden behind their curtain, the stray shoes kicked beneath the wardrobe, and the arm-chair drawn up to the gas-fire, there seemed to be nothing mean or sordid in the room despite the lack of space and the roof corner that jutted rudely in. What did it matter now if the window looked on to a back yard and a world of chimneys ?

“ Why are you so wonderfully tidy ? ” Martin asked.

“ Don’t you associate tidiness with me ? ”

“ No, you’re too wild. Tidiness is a petty virtue.”

“ Well I confess it hasn’t anything to do with my general character. I hope I’m not petty anyhow. It’s sternly practical tidiness. I used to be lazy and find my stockings muddled up with the spoons, but it soon sickened me and now I have come to prefer the fag of clearing up to the discomfort of a muddle. Besides, if I’m going to have you here it oughtn’t to be a beddy ‘ bed-sit,’ but a sittty ‘ bed-sit.’ ”

“ Your precious reputation,” he laughed.

On another night she asked him what the Berrisfords thought about his absence from home.

“ I don’t know and I don’t think I care ! ” he answered.

“ Why ? They must be interested in you, and you’re very fond of them.”

“ I dare say, but I can’t think of them now.” He

drew her to him. "Freda, I'm too happy to care about them. I just can't imagine that the world has any other place but London, or any other people but you and me. Nothing else is real; nothing counts, not India or Oxford or anything."

She yielded herself to him, but suddenly drew back.

"You mustn't go and muddle things," she said conscientiously. "Supposing you fail next September, what would I feel like?"

"I won't fail next September," he answered defiantly.

"I'm glad you said that. You must be confident, much, much more confident. I'm sure you would have been happier if you had never been afraid of things."

Ecstasy to know her gladness, to see her quick smile of confidence because he was confident! How could he have feared and doubted? He could not let her draw away: his arms must have her.

"I'm never going to be afraid again," he said. "I know what was wrong now."

"Well?"

"I didn't care about anything. I didn't know what I wanted, while everything lay in front of me. I didn't feel, though I had all the world to feel about. I didn't love, though I had all the world to love. I just drifted. Now I have what I want."

She was silent. Across the tumult of his soul stole things of the senses, the pulsing of her blood, the scent

of that brown witchery of hair, the touch of her tired hand, the vision of a glistening bow of silk on a poised foot : above all, the divine sense of his own grasping possession, her clinging weakness.

“ I know now what I want,” he went on rapidly. “ I want the same thing to go on that has just begun, the thing that has brushed all the hardness and ugliness out of the world and made the future easy. You’ve done all that. I want you.”

He crushed her to him roughly, almost hurting her : and he knew by her stillness that it pleased her so to be hurt.

“ You’re not going back now,” he whispered fiercely. “ You’re not going to knock to pieces the thing you’ve built. India is a cool heaven now ; don’t make it a fiery hell. Work is all doing and creating. Don’t make it all drudgery. Oh, I’m selfish. You’re so perfect, and I can only talk of my own work, my own troubles. Freda, I’m sorry. I——”

Still she was silent.

“ Oh, say something,” he begged. “ Forgive me for being selfish.”

“ There’s nothing to forgive.”

“ Then say—you’ve said you cared for me—say you love me.”

In a moment he had forgotten his remorse and again was claiming, insisting. And she, knowing that love can be, even must be, selfish and imperious, was glad that he should claim her and obeyed his command.

Of course Martin stayed in London over Christmas and into the New Year, living with a fullness he had never known, seeing the purpose and fineness of things which he had despised and neglected. How strange it was that all the world should be changed by that one weak figure, seemingly so ineffectual ! how strange that one mortal should carry for another the keys of heaven ! How trivial seemed all his philosophy with its objectivity of this and that when he discovered how subjective all his outlook was, how the presence or the absence of a loved one could make or mar the colour-medley of a sunset or the beauty of a tree against the sky.

One thing was certain : he gloried in possession. All his loneliness was forgotten now and, as he paced the streets, he could look upon the other couples without the pang of jealousy that once had stung him. There would be no more glances thrown furtively at passing women, no turning of an eager eye for bygone faces, no more emptiness and yearning. Deep magic lay in the thought that Freda, with her smile, and her quick mind, and her infinite grace of movement, was his to possess, to own. He was not ashamed to glory in these proprietary relations nor was she ashamed to accept them. She even welcomed them, yielding to Martin with an utter abandonment of self. She wanted only to be his, to be his loved possession, to help him and to share humbly in his triumphs and successes.

One night indeed he repented, not of his love,



but of his manner of love. He felt the indignity of ownership.

They had gone, in a fit of intellectual enthusiasm, to see a play called *Drift*. At a small outlying theatre two young men of ideas were completing the noble task of self-imposed bankruptcy by giving the British public a season of "good drama." And the public naturally helped on the work by the easy method of staying away. The house was barely half full when, after the hammerings customary in these circles, the curtain went up.

*Drift*, a play in four acts by Villiers Wentworth, turned out to be a fair specimen of that now antiquated genre, The New Drama. It had the monosyllabic title, the insistent realism, the contempt for form and dramatic convention, the arid conversation with lapses of brilliance, the admirable acting, and, above all, the Great Gloom. It was naturally a play with a point, showing, justly and forcibly, the hopeless inadequacy of modern life to provide the average man and woman with anything like a Unity of Interest. The characters drifted from home which they dreaded to work which they loathed and in the evening they made the return journey. Nothing held their lives together, nothing remained as a permanent, unifying interest. There was love, but, as Mr Villiers Wentworth pointed out, the young man is barred socially and economically from indulging in anything but hole-and-corner affairs just when he most needs real sympathy.

"Not a good play," said Martin as they walked out into the flaring streets and joined the joyous welter of confusion at Piccadilly. "The man's got no sense of humour and he thinks that everyone is miserable who hasn't got two hundred a year. The poor are just as happy as the rich. Of course they oughtn't to be, but they are."

"But there was a point," said Freda, "about unity of interest. It may be obvious, but it's true. Didn't you drift? Haven't I drifted?"

They turned into a restaurant.

As they supped they forgot about the play. But later Martin's mind returned to the subject.

"Come back," said Freda suddenly. "Penny."

"Hand over," he answered, smiling as he started.

"Well, what is it?"

"You, of course."

"I'm sorry for that. You looked so sad."

"I'm feeling ashamed," he confessed.

"What of?"

"Of the way I've thought of you. I've been so selfish. I only cared for my own escape from drifting. It's been my work, my life, my love. I have been thinking of you as the person who would make my life perfect. It's been all me, me, me. When we first met I thought of you and your work. Now it's only me and my work."

"That's as it should be."

"No, no, it isn't. A year ago I should have hated myself for thinking like this."

"Perhaps you have learned as well as lived."

"I've been a brute and there's an end of it." He was deriving a secret pleasure from his self-depreciation. There was bliss in humiliating himself before her, in grovelling at the feet of her whom he adored. If he could not get the conventional thrill from the confession of past affairs and failings, he would achieve the ecstasy of self-torture by laying bare a loftier mistake.

But she laughed at him. "Silly Billy," she said. "Pay the waiter and I'll tell you."

She told him as they drove back together in their taxi.

"After all," she began, "compare my work with yours. Mine is drudgery. Yours is big and important. It doesn't matter what becomes of mine, but it matters a lot what becomes of yours, I hate mine and I love yours. I want to give myself up to yours, to make it easier and better. Can't you see, Martin dear, that isn't selfishness or unselfishness. Those words don't count in such a case. If we love, then I'm you and you're me, and one person can't give to himself or take away from himself surely."

"It sounds so specious," he said. "And yet I still feel greedy, as though I were denying your right to be yourself."

"I don't want to be myself. I want to be different. I'm as greedy as you are and more so, only differently. As it is, the word isn't real. We're both giving and both taking and there's an end of it."

He was silent for a moment. "It's no use my trying to say how perfect you are," he said at last.

"Dear, delightful, serious, conscience-stricken gloomkins," she laughed at him. "What does all this matter . . . how we share things, I mean? The only real thing is enthusiasm, wanting and feeling and loving. You were at a loose end until you began to feel; you couldn't work, you couldn't do anything. Nor could I. And now work is all changed and seems better and easier. The office is a palace for me, India a pleasure garden for you. Do stop worrying and be sensible."

"I'm sorry," he said. "I'll try and be good. You're always right. This taxi goes far too fast. We're in your street."

"Bother," she said.

"Let's tell him to drive on somewhere else and come back in another one."

"No. You've spent far too much and we've done that often enough. I'm going to be a good girl to-night."

"Tyrant."

"Wastrel."

"He's stopping. One more kiss."

Through streets that more than ever resembled enchanted pathways in a forest of shadow and silver, Martin went back exulting to his hotel.

## IX

It was the second week in January when Martin went down to The Steading: he merely stayed to collect books and clothes and returned at once to London. While he was there he told his uncle and aunt that he was engaged to be married.

That night John Berrisford discussed the matter with his wife. "Well," he began, "what about our young Martin?"

"I suppose it's all right," said Mrs Berrisford quietly. "He's very young, but that seems to be the fashion nowadays."

"Yes, that doesn't matter. Long engagements are tragic, unhealthy things, but they'll be apart and he ought to be able to marry almost at once. Quite a lot of civilians do."

"And she's quite a nice girl."

John Berrisford gave the slight wriggle of the shoulders for which we have only the excessive word "shrug."

"Don't you approve?" added his wife.

"Yes and no. On the whole, no." He kicked at the fire testily. "She's quite a nice girl and clever and reasonable beyond the average. If Martin were

going to hang about in town, well and good. But really is she the wife of an Indian Civilian ? ”

“ But, John, surely ! You with your ideas about freedom ! You don’t believe in the marriage of convenience, I know. Isn’t Martin to have his choice ? ”

“ Of course he shall have every choice. I’m not one to bluster or give orders or interfere. He’s going to marry the girl, not I. I know that. But I’d like him to think a little first. Do consider the facts. Freda is clever and quick. Perhaps she really cares for Martin, perhaps she’s only sick to death of the hellish existence decreed by modern civilisation for penniless orphans of the female sex. But she has lived in a groove, she has never met people—not the kind of people she’d run up against in India. She doesn’t like games or society. She likes talking and arguing and lying in bed. She’d hate the Anglo-Indian just as she hates any kind of pomp and circumstance. She hasn’t the vaguest notion as to what they’ll expect of her. Worse still, she hasn’t even health. She would be invalided home in a year and Martin with a salary of three or perhaps four hundred a year would have to support a wife whom he only saw on leave. You’ve got to consider his career and his general happiness. There is no reason why he shouldn’t find a woman who understands the kind of life and behaviour, a woman who could fit in, and yet has brains and charm enough for an intelligent person.”

"Mary Brodrick?" suggested Mrs Berrisford.  
"The kind of girl who sings about her caravan resting after dinner?"

"We needn't go as far as that. Something between the two."

"You're a heartless old schemer, John. We must respect his choice."

"Absolutely. But I'm fairly confident about the result. Anyhow there is plenty of time and it's Martin's first affair."

"Are you sure?"

"I have watched the signs of times. This is the first time he has taken a month to see the varsity match."

"But he is stubborn when he has once settled on a thing. He doesn't decide quickly, I know, but when he has he is firm."

"We'll see. As it is, I suppose you must have her down for Easter. I got her her present job and I know her employers well. I can easily get them to allow her a holiday then. And when we've got them, we must leave them very much alone."

"But surely——"

"My dear, it's the only hope. Keep them apart, hint at the unsuitability of marriage, and they'll elope on nothing in a fortnight's time. That's quite certain. My idea is to bang them together fairly hard. I don't want it to hurt, but I do want them to have a clear idea as to what they are both made of."

“Do you think it’s quite fair?”

“Isn’t it what they would want themselves? It’s the only possible thing we can do. And also,” he added quietly, “it will give a certain interest to next Easter.”

But there was no need to beg a holiday for Freda. In February, when the winds came driving up the Channel and brought to England a month-long burden of rain and sleet, her health gave way again and she was warned that she was not strong enough for the wear and tear of an office life. For most people it is true that colds are not liable to the laws of cause and effect: they happen or they don’t and to be soaked to the skin is no more fatal than to bask in the sun. But for Freda to arrive at the office with feet wet and cold meant certain visitation. And by six o’clock she was always worn out. Now she would have to rely on an uncle and aunt. The uncle had money and had offered already to release Freda from the misery of work, but she had refused, so intolerable had seemed his great Victorian mansion on Sheffield’s edge. She had wanted, in her youthful courage, to work and to be free. But now there was no use in fighting and she yielded partly from a consideration of hard fact, partly because her uncle had retired from his business and was coming to London. Idleness in town with an allowance! By privation she had been taught the meaning



and the value of both. So it was as a woman of moderate means and unlimited leisure that Freda came to The Steading for Easter.

Martin came from Oxford jaded and tired out. He had had to work hard in order to make up for a vacation of complete indolence. The wet February had brought floods and stinted exercise and despondency : it had been tedious work, toiling over a new language in those lonely Ship Street rooms. His soul hungered for sympathy, his body for the infinite swell and splendour of the moor and for the cold sting of the winds that whirled across it like the thongs of a lash.

For a week he stayed about the house and strolled in the near woods with Freda, whose recent illness had left her far too weak for real walking. She hadn't the strength nor could she risk a strain or chill. So Martin lingered with her all day, while they built fantastic castles of hopes and visions. Then the inactivity grew intolerable to his body, tore at his nerves, and made him ravenous for the moor and the golf-links. Freda despised golf and could not understand how any sane person could be bothered with it. They squabbled about it gently, never suspecting that it might come to matter.

Fate fought against Freda.

Martin, whenever during these days he handled a club, found that he could do nothing wrong : he was "on his game." And the Cartmells came down for the

Easter recess. Godfrey had captured the seat two years ago and had settled down comfortably on a back bench from which his wife intended to oust him. But the back-bencher may live strenuous nights and days : he too was tired and wanted air and exercise. And so in the afternoons Martin was called upon as much by civility as by the craving of his heart to motor with them to the golf-course and join in a foursome. Desperate warfare took place in which Martin was Viola's, Godfrey Margaret Berrisford's ally. And Martin was wonderful. His drives flew far and low, straight for the flag or the direction post : no ugly jarring told him of the topped iron-shot : his short putts ran straight into the middle of the hole. He dug his partner's fozzled drives out of heather and hedge and laid her wild approaches dead with a niblick. Up on that lonely course with only the wind and the white clouds for neighbours, with no one to keep them back or hurry them on, with turf so springy that a foot could never tire, so spongy-soft that a brassie might be lightly taken and effectively wielded, with the exquisite strain of even conflict, with matches taken to the last green and won, perhaps by Martin's inimitable 'run-up'—yes, it was golf.

The joy of it was almost insupportable. Martin began to live for those afternoons ; yet, if he had been off his game, had sliced with his driver and topped with his irons, as was indeed his wont, the golf-club would have lost its appeal : there is little pleasure in playing

golf badly, but there is all the world in playing above your form.

Once Freda came up to watch them and walk as far as she could. But she was plainly bored, pleaded fatigue, and went back to the little club-house where she sat reading. To Martin, in his present mood of triumphant exultation, it seemed incredible that anyone could fail to see the point of it.

He tried to convince her. "Perhaps you can't imagine the thrill that comes from a really true hit: really it's one of the few good things in the world. The ball goes off clean and sweet and leaves you with a faint tingling that lets you know you've done the trick. And then you climb a ridge and there's the ball white and glistening on the green. That means you've done exactly what you set out to do and that you've got a long putt to beat Bogey. And if you ram it in!"

"Baby!" she said, laughing. "Did 'ums like 'ums bouncy ball."

At first he laughed too and told himself that naturally they couldn't share all the same tastes. In the morning and evening he stayed with her, neglecting his work. But gradually he came to feel that there was something more than jocosity in her denunciation of the bouncy ball.

Soon after Easter one of Freda's colds kept her in bed for breakfast. It was the Cartmells' last day but one and everything pointed to a final test of strength.

They went over in the morning and stayed to lunch at the club-house. There were two great matches, of which each side gained one. Martin had not yet lost his skill : he had dreaded the day of torture when he would go "right off."

"Let's have another nine holes," said Viola Cartmell as they took an early tea. "We aren't keeping Martin from his duty. And it's our last chance and such an evening."

They agreed to play and nerved themselves for faultless execution.

An hour later Martin lay upon the steep bank at the edge of the ninth green. Now he had grasped most certainly, what Freda would never grasp, the mystery of Ham and Eggs. In the fine light of sunset the moor seemed to tower illimitably above them, crowned with its eternal tors, clear-cut as by a razor's edge against the vast blue emptiness behind. The April breeze was whispering in the grass and timid larks soared and plunged and hung singing in the void. Before him was the smooth-shaven green, true as a billiard cloth but humped with testing undulations. And there were the three other players awaiting with tense anxiety the future of the match. Godfrey was kneeling to take the line of his putt : the ball would end its journey along the side of a veritable mountain, a glorious stroke to achieve ! Farther back were Margaret and Viola. Suddenly the breeze caught them, snatched at a stray

wisp of hair, played with their skirts, and gave a last caress to cheeks already kissed to flame. There were grace and strength knit perfectly: to Martin they seemed, after the slight form of Freda, tremendous. Yet why shouldn't women be strong? He wanted them to be strong, to walk with him, to fear neither wind nor weather. And Freda . . .

His thoughts returned swiftly to the match. Godfrey was on the point of playing: he had this, a ten footer, to halve the hole and the match. There was silence and then the gentle tap of the club on a rubber-cored ball. One gazed, one shouted. The ball had lipped the hole and swung out to the left.

In the car they fought the whole match over again.

"If only I hadn't given you the sixteenth this morning——"

"No, it was my fault. If I miss two-foot putts, you can't be expected——"

And thus during the whole journey superb concentration on an end to be won, superb oblivion to work and wealth and weariness.

Martin found Freda yawning in the porch.

"I thought you were staying upstairs all day," he began.

"Who said so?"

"The maid, I think."

"Well, I never said anything about it. You don't seem very glad to see me."

"Of course I am. Only I meant that I would have come back earlier if I had known."

"I wouldn't keep you from your golf."

He sat beside her, but she did not welcome him. She was hurt.

"If I'd only known, I wouldn't——"

"Day after day," she whispered. "I know you like to be out and about. I don't claim you always, do I? But sometimes, surely."

"I didn't know," he repeated remorsefully. "I didn't know."

"Yesterday you went and to-morrow you'll go."

"No, I won't. Freda, I'm a brute. I've been rotten to you. I've nothing to say for myself."

"You've got to go to-morrow."

"I won't. You don't want me to go."

"You must go. I'm not going to keep you, if you don't stay of your own accord. The ball is much more amusing than I am."

He pleaded, he fought against her, but she insisted on his going.

The punishment was effective. He went in anguish and played with no zest for the game. He sliced, he topped, he missed short putts. The match fizzled out on the fourteenth green, a fiasco.

The Cartmells hurried back to London and Martin remained to make peace with Freda. He had been unspeakably pained by the sordidness and waste of

energy and peace that quarrelling had entailed. He hated the suspicions and embarrassments that must linger on: he was passionately desirous of restoring the old intimacy and yet . . . somehow or other the wound remained. He couldn't forget that evening on the ninth green. Why wouldn't Freda see the point of these things? Why wouldn't she walk? She was strong enough now for a mile or two. Almost he was angry with her for having been ill, for it is an odd feature of humanity that we sometimes dislike people for their sufferings, hate them for a cough or sniff. And now Martin was on the point of blaming Freda for the weakness he had once adored. Why wasn't she strong like Margaret or Viola? Why didn't she understand about the moor and wind-swept spaces and the miracle of hitting a golf-ball?

While he was bearing the olive branch these questions, dreaded and strongly combated, kept forcing themselves into the narrow passes of his mind as the Persian host flooded into Thermopylæ. It was futile to feign deafness: in time they would force a hearing. And there were other less easily worded doubts and apprehensions.

Perhaps the summer-time came as a release. More than he would have cared to admit, Martin wanted to be alone, to see Freda dispassionately, from a distance. And so to Oxford.

Freda, while undergoing all unconsciously this dis-

passionate appreciation, retired to London. But within a few weeks' time she had received another invitation to Devonshire, and tired not so much of town as of her relations she gladly accepted.

At The Steading were a Mr and Mrs Brodrick with their daughter. Arthur Brodrick had been contemporary with John Berrisford at Oxford and had passed high into the Indian Civil Service. Just before his time for a pension was due he had been invalided home and had missed the full reward of his service. The Brodricks lived at Sutton in a remote mediocrity of wealth more galling than actual poverty.

Was it Chance again, the Chance that had brought a perfect Easter and put Martin on his game, that now seemed to keep the conversation on Oriental diseases and the rigours of imperial service? Certainly Freda heard more of fever in distant stations than of health and company at Simla. But the Brodricks had not been divorced from patriotism by the hardness of their lot: they still believed in the flag, in the pomp and state of the British Raj, in stately dinners at Government House where the couples went down to the feast in order of social precedence, and they recounted squabbles, petty but bitter antagonisms, of rival ladies who considered themselves insulted by their positions in the troop of diners.

Freda listened silently and learned.

So this was the life for which she had bargained.



Eternal fever—so they implied—eternal society of the Brodricks and their kind ! For Martin with his work to love and his career to think about such things might be well enough ! But for her ! How could she blend with this unknown, this unparalleled society ?

Then the Berrisfords suggested that they should all go to Oxford for Eights Week. Mr and Mrs Berrisford had to be in town : would Mary Brodrick come ? And, naturally, Freda ? Both the girls accepted eagerly. It was soon settled and rooms were engaged at the Mitre.

On reading the letter announcing their plans Martin groaned in the spirit. It wasn't, of course it wasn't, that he did not want to see Freda. Did he not write to her as eagerly as ever ? Did she not answer ? But Eights Week of all times !

Martin was sufficiently a lover of Oxford, summery Oxford of the still water-ways, to loathe and despise Eights Week, that Whitsuntide holiday of the wealthy, when the city is invaded by a host of rich trippers, whose tripping has not even the justification of beer-bottles and hearty bestiality. He did not wish to eat salmon mayonnaise, to drink champagne cup, to propel, in faultless flannels, a punt among a solid mass of punts, to go for picnics where all London was reveling. His choice would have been to launch a vessel on the upper river, to find some tranquil backwater past Eynsham, with a canopy of willow and the scene

of flowering meadows ; or else to make use of deserted tennis courts and to enjoy things properly. Now they were going to break in upon him : and indeed another idle vacation had left him work enough to do. They had not come when he was a fresher and such things were allowable, and the Berrisfords knew Oxford well. Presumably they desired to show Freda the city and its ways. But why, oh why, in Eights Week ? It wasn't like the Berrisfords.

They arrived duly and lived in state at the Mitre : they mingled with the crowds, tramped the colleges, and demanded to have things pointed out to them. Mary Brodrick said all the right things. Martin shuddered as the phrases came out in turn :

“ Can we see the kitchens ? ” (at Christ Church).

“ Where are the Prince's rooms ? ” (at Magdalen).

“ Isn't this the clever college ? ” (at Balliol).

It was a gloomy ceremony.

There was Freda. And she . . . well, he had to admit that she didn't harmonise with this world of fine raiment and expensive bean-feasts. The Freda who glittered in the punt, the Freda clothed sumptuously at her uncle's expense was undeniably different from the insignificant wisp of a girl in plain blue coat and skirt who had hurried out of the office at six and come to Martin for rest and comfort. To have explained his feelings accurately would have been an impossible task for Martin, but he could not put aside a vague sensation

that Freda was wrongly placed in this world, that she was pre-eminently a martyr and a rebel, not a woman of leisure.

She did not even know what to say. There is a particular kind of speech appropriate to these occasions : it is neither flirtation nor conversation in the proper sense, but a discreet blend, a mixture as insipid as it is inevitable. It does not demand brains or wit, but a certain quality, a training. Mary Brodrick, with all her limitations, knew the game ; she was jolly and made things go. Freda hung back or, when she came forward, made mistakes. Odd that Martin should have been angry with Freda for her inability to play a game which he himself despised. Yet it did pain him that she didn't " fit in."

As a strange word whose meaning has recently been discovered seems to the reader to occur on every page he reads, so Freda suddenly revealed to Martin in a hundred ways her incapacity for " fitting in." And it was to the society of countless Brodricks that Martin would have to take her.

On the Wednesday evening, when the river was rendered invisible by the press of vessels and fair women, when the supporters of the victorious college swam across the river and dived from barge and boat-house, when supper-parties began to disappear up the Cherwell and gramophones to tinkle in shady recesses, Mary Brodrick caught her train to town, Mr and Mrs

Berrisford went to see the Irish Players, and Martin took Freda on the river.

To avoid the crowd they were going to the Cherwell above the rollers. She kept him waiting in the taxi that was to take them to Tims'.

At Tims' she found the punt dirty, said the cushions were filthy, and would ruin her dress.

"Eights Week," said Martin. "We've got to be thankful to get any kind of a punt."

Still she grumbled. Martin ran into a projecting bush and, before she knew what had occurred, her hat had been pushed over her eyes, her hair disarranged, and her face scratched. She said nothing at all. Worse than any expostulation! It grew cold and a chilly breeze sprang up.

Inevitably they quarrelled. There was no particular cause for the outburst. A long week of strain, of mutual revelation and discovery, of mingled pleasure and annoyance, was bound to tell.

They had at least the satisfaction of making things clear.

"You only cared for me as a martyr," she ended.

"I didn't, you know I didn't," he protested on the spur of the moment.

But both knew that it was more than half the truth.

Their letters of renunciation crossed.

Chance and John Berrisford had been powerful allies.

## X

ON a still October afternoon Martin lay where the first slopes of Grey Knotts go sweeping up to the great mountain mass of The Gables and the Scawfells. He looked down upon Seatoller, diminutive below him, and on the curving beauty of Borrowdale, burnished with late bracken, aflame with autumnal trees. Behind him he knew, he felt, were the mountains that he loved, stretching crag upon crag to the desolate screes of Wast Water and the glimpse of the shimmering sea. Borrowdale . . . there flashed suddenly upon his mind the verse of the Elfreyan poet and he quoted it now to the winds and rocks and a curious stone-finch :

“The flaming bracken fires the breast  
Of bosky Borrowdale,  
Down swoops the sun in a riot of red  
Behind Scawfell to a watery bed,  
And the moon hath clomb o’er Skiddaw’s head,  
So perfect and so pale.”

With that pathetic verse came other memories, flowing torrentially through the opened flood-gates of his mind. For five years he had forgotten Elfrey and Berney’s and all his schoolday toils and triumphs.

Only one week-end had he spent there and that in his 'fresher' year. He had forgotten because Oxford had been so generous and had given him so much to think and feel and say. But now his recollections seemed strangely vivid despite their long storage in the lumber-room of his mind. Foskett had made another step on the pathway of prosperity, but Berney was still at work : Vickers had moved to higher things, but Barmy Walters lingered on, for he had reached the dotage in which years add nothing to decay. The same old jokes would be played, the crashing of the instrument-boxes, the passing of fruit-bags and biscuit tins, and the pollution of his water with ink. And somehow, against the promptings of conscience, Martin felt that it was right for these things to go on. Poor Barmy ! But with his uncle he believed in Institutions.

Then the amazing disappearance of people broke in upon his mind. Spots, for instance. His career had flickered out at Cambridge, where they had despised his athletics. Drink, perhaps. Cullen and Neave, surely they must be in the motor trade. Gregson had vanished utterly. Everything demanded that he should be writing for the Rationalist Press, but where was he ? Anstey was at the Bar, Rayner a subaltern in India. 'Granny' had recently been head of Berney's, Granny whom Martin had loathed and swiped. It seemed unreal and impossible. But now, as he looked back over that gap of five years, he

realised that Elfrey with all its troubles and its narrowness had been kind. The avenging of Gideon and the night of pitchers, the bowling of "googlies," the friendship of Finney . . . astonishing that things so good should have slipped away. Lazily chewing the long sweet stems of grass, he refought a hundred skirmishes.

More recent memories came floating down upon the stream. Galer and his 'deemagogues,' the Push, Chard and his career : very soon he would be paying a long farewell to all this world of evanescence. For such a world it was, good but transitory. It was not real as life's work would be real. True that Chard had taken his Union career as seriously as death itself, true that the Push had been serious about their discussions, those night-long tussles about God and Woman and the Universe : and anything taken seriously has value of a kind. But had their value been greater than that of an amusing prologue or a curtain-raiser which it would have been unfortunate to miss ? It was good that these things should have been : it was not good that they should be for ever.

And Freda ? World of evanescence again ! She had passed so utterly away that Martin could scarcely believe in the events and emotions of the winter. He had no regrets, and he believed that she had none : of late his plans and prospects had moved at such a pace that wounds could not linger and were easily forgotten. They had rendered each other mutual

service and mutual relief. Once he had thought that he loved, but now he knew of his mistake : Freda had spoken the obvious truth when she said : " You aren't really in love with me, you're in love with love." He had wanted sympathy and in his quest had idealised the first woman who gave it him. Only a fortnight ago his uncle had said : " Remember you're still only twenty-three. You haven't found out everything about life—or love." He had said it kindly and he had been right.

Now indeed he had fiercely reacted against his search for sympathy. Surely a man should be able to face his work and go through with it, even if it was agony to do so, without running to a woman's arms for comfort. He was ashamed of his cowardice of the winter. Upon the hillside with the exhilaration of autumn in his blood it seemed so easy to face things and be resolute. This love ! It was like religion, just Funk. Then he paused, angry with himself. He was erring as much on the one side as he had lately erred on the other. He could understand passionate desire : he could understand sentimentality, for he had not forgotten Lawrence's defence of *The Little Grey Home*. But this Love—of which one heard and read—what was it ? Perhaps some day . . . He surrendered to his visions . . . and he would come back with her to a good house in Devon, very square and grey, with smooth lawns and paddocks and covert-clad hills



behind. There would he become an initiate in the avuncular mystery of Ham and Eggs. That religion at least he had it in him to respect.

Rendell and Lawrence were coming up the hill; they had been together for a week at Seatoller, renewing last year's successful holiday, and to-morrow they were to separate. It was the last reunion, for Martin was to sail next month. The other two had stayed in after lunch to answer letters: Martin was to await them on the hill and then they would walk.

As he watched them plodding up to him his mind wandered to the future. When they reached him they were out of breath and demanded a moment's rest before they moved on. They lay in silence, basking in the strong October sun.

"I've been thinking," exclaimed Martin suddenly.

"Good," said Rendell. "Let's have it."

"It's about this India business. I think I'm glad on the whole."

"Well, I've had a year of the city," muttered Lawrence, "and I don't recommend it."

"After all, it's doing something," Martin went on. "Good or bad, it's action, administration, government of a sort. If I stayed in London, I would find it jolly hard to work: I'd probably do as the rest, just loaf."

"Thank you," said Rendell.

"I wasn't alluding to you. You haven't the talent

for loafing, and I think I have, in a mild kind of way. It won't be bad for me to desert the world of conversations and ideas."

The other two remained silent, gazing at the wonderful valley below. Martin wished they would speak. He did not know whether he really believed in what he was saying or whether he was trying to believe in it because there was comfort in such faith. If only one of them would confirm his opinions!

"Don't you ever feel that it's all petty and limited?" Martin continued. "Living in London, I mean, and never seeing the world and how it's run and the different tastes of men and the tendencies and forces? I want to get into the middle of it and, if I've got to do Government work, then I don't mind doing that. It isn't merely negative, like most of a barrister's work."

Eternal honesty and reliability of man with man! A woman would have caught his anxious tones and given him sympathy and confirmation at the expense of belying her convictions. Rendell merely said what he felt and later Martin was glad of it.

"If that is the case," Rendell answered quietly, "you're plainly the man for the job. It isn't often that the Empire gets an intelligent person who cares about his work."

"I believe I'll like it when I'm there," Martin added. "Of course I know there will be gaps and times of despair. But I feel that I have had my seven fat years

and it's up to me to face seven lean ones. Then fatness ought to come again."

"Which, being interpreted," said Lawrence, "means seven years or so in the wilderness and then better jobs and a big screw and no end of a career."

"I won't be as detailed as that. But as I've got to eat the pie I shall dig about for the plums. What do you think, Rendell, K.C., M.P.?"

"I agree."

"And you, Lord Mayor?"

"I have every intention of making at least five thousand a year. My god, yes. If I go into that city I'll damned well fetch something out."

"Anyhow," said Martin after a pause, "we have had years of plenty. It was all good, the Push and digs and everything."

Rendell agreed. "It couldn't have been managed much better," he said. "We had some capital times."

Lawrence yawned vastly. "You emotional lads," he said, "will soon be calling the Old School Ithaca and talking about 'stern nurses of men' and 'dreaming spires.' I can't allow it. Let's walk."

They rose and went up silently into the hills like men who understand about walking.

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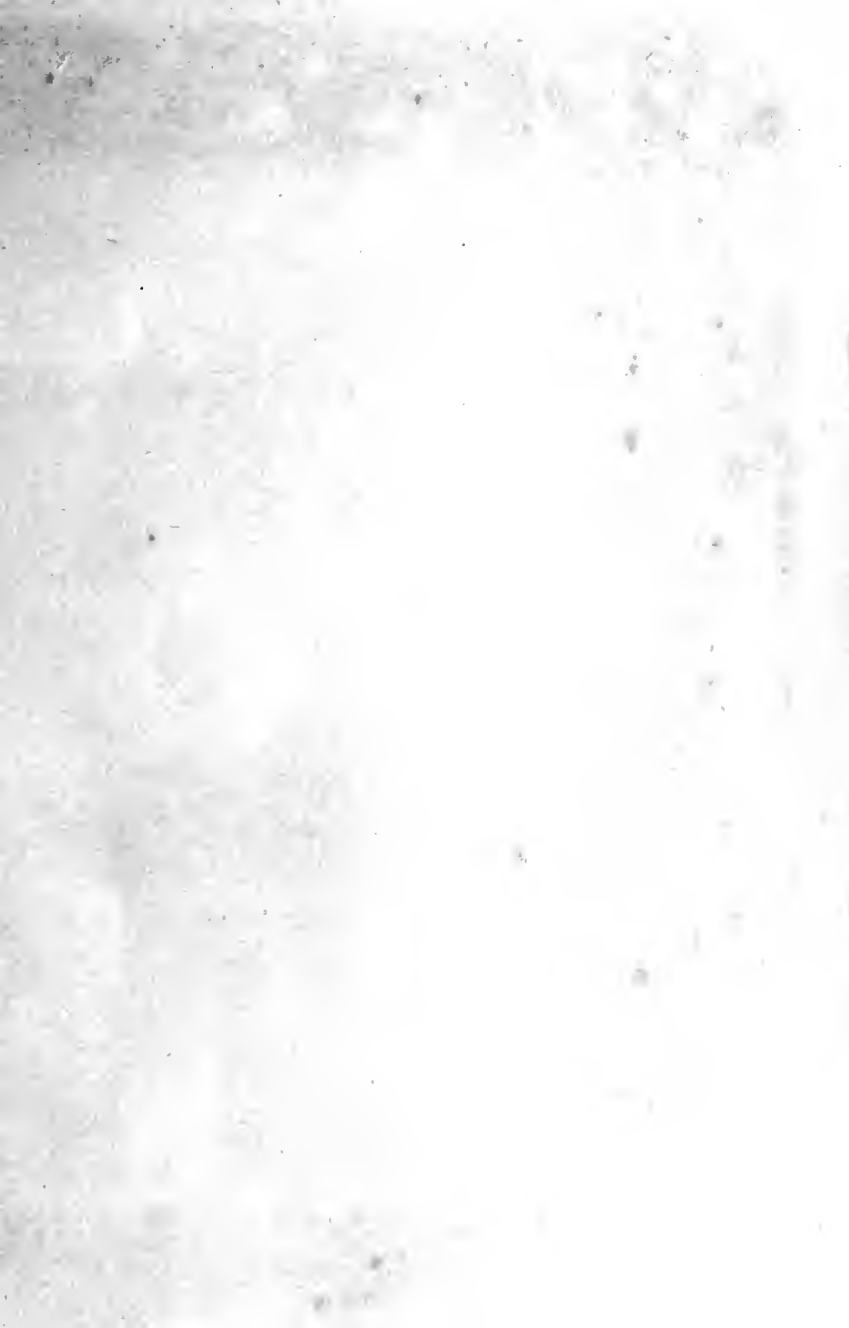
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